



# **Informal Leisure as a Source of Social Capital Formation: *A Festival Case Study***

by

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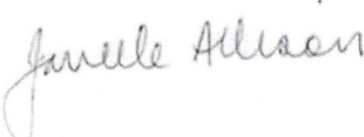
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# Abstract

In Australia participation in informal, individual-focussed forms of leisure activities is increasing. This can be understood in the context of changing social landscapes. It is argued that new forms of social capital may be emerging through these 'looser' affiliations and activities. This suggests that funding contexts, for example spaces and activity programs like festivals, rather than directly funding networks such as organisations might be an alternate approach toward fostering the growth of social capital. These conditions call for a rethink of how to better leverage informal leisure contexts, especially by governments.

This research focusses on how leisure contexts of a more informal nature can stimulate productive social capital. The research thus sits at the intersection of the literature on leisure and various theoretical perspectives linked to ideas about social capital. To illuminate insight the research explores perspectives on leisure as these perspectives can alter over time due to such factors as generational change, work/life balance and emerging leisure activities. The research also examines the theories of third place, social capital and the strength of weak ties to construct a framework to explore the interplay between leisure activities, space and place characteristics and social connectivity in a changing social and leisure participatory landscape. The framework draws from these literatures to better understand the productive potential of informal leisure contexts.

The research is conducted through the application of the framework within a constructivist-interpretive paradigm utilising a mixed method, case study approach. The research investigates the social interactions created through leisure activities of attendees at an annual, three-day, camping-based, entertainment festival in Marion Bay, Tasmania, Australia known as the Falls Music and Arts Festival (the Falls). In an Australian context of camping-based events, this is a large festival of approximately 16,000 attendees. Over 900 survey responses were obtained and thirty qualitative

interviews to add further insight were conducted over two separate events in 2010 and 2011.

The research demonstrates a level of self-initiated community and weak social ties that can be developed and strengthened through leisure pursuits of a more informal, and even temporary, nature. This thesis argues that the understanding of social capital can be enhanced by more focus on how people meet and form friendships and acquaintances in informal settings. This research, through the application of a social capital tool developed by the Australian Bureau of Statistics, finds that social capital can be formed without the need for formal groups.

Analysis through the lens of third place elucidates place-based factors that can also stimulate social capital. An interrelationship between three distinct 'vibes' within spaces – the social vibe, the leisure activity vibe and the vibe that place characteristics assist to create – uncovers the importance of place-based factors in shaping social capital. As a key finding within this research, identification of these three vibes has led to the configuring of a *social leisure places* platform. The research illustrates the notion of a place-based friend where frequency of engagement with people in spaces and places is integral to its identification. Social media has an evident role to play in continuing social bonds formed within physical spaces and is important for social capital development.

The findings from this research are important to scholars researching leisure and social capital as well as those researching emerging trends in and the social and place dimensions of festivals and events. They are also of importance to practitioners and policy makers/workers within community planning, design and policy development for public spaces, programs and events.

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## **1. A Practitioner's Dilemma**



## **1.1 Introduction**

Organisations such as sporting clubs, community groups and service clubs have been a traditional bastion of social networking and 'getting ahead' in life. They often utilise publicly-owned spaces for their activities. However, nowadays people are increasingly participating in leisure activities of a more informal nature. One can witness these non-group focussed activities such as walking, cycling, visiting parks, attending public events and eating out in their local communities and can only suspect that, in our increasingly time poor lives, community-based organisations utilising these public leisure settings will be affected by it. This is challenging traditional policy approaches to leisure provision.

There is an evident lack of scholarly research, literature, data and insight into how the changing participation in leisure is affecting social capital. Scholars are enquiring as to what contexts might foster social capital into the future. Practitioners and policy makers need these insights for future policy and strategic planning directions in this area.

## **1.2 Purpose of the Study**

This thesis addresses this lack of scholarly insight through exploring what role informal leisure contexts can play in the building of social capital and what spatial aspects are conducive to it. Through the examination of scholarly literature and a festival case study, this research explores the social interactions that can emerge through contemporary, informal leisure activity and the role/s of the informal leisure spaces and places in this. It looks at how and why they can stimulate productive social capital.<sup>1</sup> The aim of the research is not to debate social capital theory but to identify how social capital can be researched and observed in informal leisure. It

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<sup>1</sup> The interest in social capital in this thesis is focussed on the positive notions of health and wellbeing – the productive side of social capital. This research does not focus on what Portes (1998) describes as the dark side of social capital (sometimes known as negative social capital).

also examines what place characteristics might be appropriate to further encourage these social interactions to build. It does not compare informal leisure contexts to formal ones but seeks to identify how informal leisure (both spatially and in activity) could assist policy makers to enhance positive and productive social capital formation.

### **1.3 Inspiration for the Research**

The author of this thesis (the researcher) was a practitioner employed in a local government council<sup>2</sup> in Tasmania, a state of Australia, during the early to mid-2000s. Working in community and cultural development and recreation planning roles, he witnessed a change in the way people were using leisure spaces. The researcher received anecdotal evidence and often saw first-hand the reduction in formal participation in organised leisure activities such as sport and community groups. As an example, clubs were telling him that they were losing junior players to other commitments such as an increase in part-time work opportunities, educational needs and to less formal leisure activities such as skateboarding, computer games and meeting with friends. They were also struggling to access and retain volunteers in their formal activities.

However, during this time it was evident that participation in informal leisure activities such as walking, cycling and public event attendance was on the increase. The council concerned had made a conscious effort to become actively engaged in this space with initiatives such as public events, waterfront developments and cycle-ways. These competing and changing interests pointed to a transition taking place. To make the situation more difficult, there was limited information available to the researcher as a practitioner to assist making informed decisions. The challenge could

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<sup>2</sup> In Australia, “the six states and the Northern Territory have established one further level of government” known as local government (Australian Government, 2014). “The states and the Northern Territory each have many local governments within their borders. The state or territory government defines the powers of the local governments, and decides what geographical areas those governments are responsible for.” (Australian Government, 2014)

be witnessed but the level of scholarly research to back it up was lacking. This context created an environment that questioned how to best support both traditional and emerging leisure activities of both formal and informal natures. From speaking informally with other practitioners and policy makers in and around other Tasmanian local government entities, the researcher deduced that this context was being witnessed elsewhere too.

It was clear that there needed to be more insight obtained around the less-tangible benefits of informal leisure activity and spaces, how to better leverage these activities and spaces and what characteristics of the more informal activity and spaces might maximise community benefit. There existed quantitative data sets from organisations such as Sport and Recreation Tasmania and the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) on how many people were participating in activities but limited research on the intangible benefits/costs of leisure funding and support beyond health outcomes of physical activity.

The dilemma for this practitioner was three-fold:

1. What are the impacts on communities of this change in leisure participation?
2. What data could usefully inform better decision-making around leisure-based services and the dynamic societal changes taking place?
3. How might the policy makers and practitioners facilitate leisure-based services into the future?

### **1.4 Scope of the Study**

This thesis looks at how informal leisure spaces and the leisure-based activities conducted within them are conducive to the accumulation and extraction of social capital. This is an area of needed research (Maynard and Kleiber, 2005). It does so in the context of public spaces where informal leisure activities play out. These

constructs of informal leisure activity and informal leisure spaces and places are to be known in this thesis as *informal leisure contexts*.

This is important because “public spaces such as parks, village squares and other areas – cultivating places where people can spontaneously meet – are important for the creation and development of social capital” (National Economic and Social Forum (NESF), 2003, p. 108). This thesis canvasses the changing nature of leisure participation, the ways in which people socialise in contemporary society and the roles that spaces and places can play in this.

This research explores perspectives on leisure to uncover what leisure is and means to people. It does this to elucidate how the change in leisure over time can affect people’s participation in it. The thesis utilises perspectives on place to explore why the concept of place has become a public policy focus in recent times and why it is relevant to better understanding contemporary leisure. Oldenburg’s (1999) third place theory, based in a focus on social leisure activity in places that are not the family home or the workplace, is utilised as an assessment tool with which to do this.

Social capital theory is examined to scope how social capital is conceptualised and, subsequently, measured. A social capital tool developed by the ABS is utilised as a framework in which to extract insight. This examination is relevant to this research as it provides insight to the practitioner and the policy maker on how informal leisure contexts might be leveraged to build social capital. Given that there appears to be an increase in people ‘bowling alone’ (see Putnam, 2000), the strength of weak ties literature of Granovetter (1973, 1983) is canvassed to see how the strength of social ties between individuals might provide insight into how contemporary social capital is built in informal leisure contexts. This thesis, however, does not attempt to map networks through the use of social network theory. It explores how social ties are formed in informal leisure contexts and how they exhibit characteristics of social capital.

This thesis explores the links between informal leisure activity and the spaces and places where informal leisure activity is acted out. It then examines how these factors influence social capital. It is within leisure that civic engagement in communities has traditionally thrived (McLean and Hurd, 2011). Civic engagement can lead to building social capital (Putnam, 2000). Due to a shift toward more informal forms of leisure (Marriott, 2013) and more individualised affiliations (Schuller, 2007), it is important to study informal leisure contexts specifically in this thesis to seek insight into how social bonds may be formed in a contemporary leisure environment.

The thesis brings together perspectives on leisure and the theories of social capital, strength of weak ties and third place to see how the interplay between informal leisure activities, place characteristics and social interaction between actors can build social capital in a contemporary context. It does not, however, explore the policy impacts in depth as this will be the basis of future research.

The thesis does not canvass the views of people who do not participate in activities within informal leisure contexts as the research focusses whether informal leisure contexts are a source of social capital formation and the characteristics that shape this. It canvasses the views of people who actively engage in these contexts. Views of individuals not participating in the specific informal leisure context examined in this thesis would, arguably, not have assisted to answer the research questions below.

## 1.5 Research Question

The question explored in this research is:

*Do informal leisure contexts build contemporary social networks and, subsequently, social capital?*

To answer this question, a series of sub-questions are asked:

1. *Are weak ties present in informal leisure contexts and, if so, what role do they play in generating social capital, and how?*
2. *What are the characteristics of these contexts that can assist to build social capital?*
3. *How do informal leisure contexts support and/or expand the ideas proposed by Granovetter and researchers of social capital?*

## 1.6 Methodology Outline

The research is conducted through the application of the framework within a constructivist-interpretive paradigm utilising a mixed method, case study approach. In order to answer the above research question, a case study of the Tasmanian version of the *Falls Music and Arts Festival* (the Falls)<sup>3</sup> is investigated. The Falls is located annually in Marion Bay, Tasmania, Australia, over the New Year period. It has been in existence since 2003. The Falls in Tasmania is the sister festival of the

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<sup>3</sup> References to ‘Falls Music and Arts Festival’, ‘the festival’, ‘Falls’ or ‘the Falls’ in this thesis refers to the Marion Bay event in Tasmania, Australia and is referenced with the relevant year (2010 or 2011) where appropriate.

Lorne event held in Victoria, Australia, at the same time.<sup>4</sup> It is a camping-based, music and arts festival located on a large, remote farm with views over mountains and the Tasman Sea. Approximately 16,000 people attend the Falls. This positions the Falls in the context of larger camping-based festivals in Australia such as *Woodford Folk Festival* in Queensland and *Golden Plains* in Victoria. This case is selected as it operates as an informal leisure context, albeit temporarily, for attendees and is relatively new in regard to an informal leisure context in that it has only been in existence for a decade. While it is marketed as a music and arts festival, this event is social in nature. It operates within unique surrounds and environments while, at the same time, housing a temporary ‘community’ that lives on-site.

Two quantitative surveys were conducted. These surveys also contained additional qualitative questions. These were complemented by a series of qualitative interviews and focus groups to add further insight. The surveys and interviews were conducted over two separate events in 2010 and 2011 with respondents primarily aged in generations X and Y cohorts. This data was then analysed through the lenses of a social capital framework provided by the ABS (2004) and Oldenburg’s (1999) third place characteristics.

### 1.7 Thesis Structure

The next chapter (chapter two) is a review of relevant literatures to develop the research framework within which this thesis is located. In that chapter, perspectives on leisure and the theories of third place, social capital and the strength of weak ties are canvassed. It is on the margins of these literatures collectively that the research sits. The interaction between these theories and perspectives is the knowledge gap that this research focusses on.

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<sup>4</sup> Since commencement of this research, a third sister event began in 2013 in Byron Bay, New South Wales, Australia (see triplej, 2013).

Chapter three outlines how and why the methodology and the methods were selected and utilised in the study. This chapter also provides details of the approach to data analysis. Chapter four complements chapter three by affording the reader an understanding of festivals and the dynamics which characterise them. While this chapter specifically focuses on scoping the Falls as the case study selected for this thesis, it also canvasses scholarly literature and social commentary on some key contemporary issues facing music festivals. This approach assists to contextualise the Falls case.

Chapter five is an analysis of the empirical data and chapter six is a synthesis of findings which extracts key contributions to the understanding of informal leisure, place characteristics and contemporary social capital. Chapter six links the findings from the empirical research to the knowledge gap identified in chapter two. The thesis concludes in chapter seven with responses to the research question and a consideration of potential policy and practitioner implications and future research opportunities.



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## **2. Literature Review**

### 2.1 Introduction

According to Bauman (2001, p. 13), we live in a society of “increasingly individualized individuals”. People are increasingly participating in leisure activities that are more informal and individual-focussed in nature rather than formal and group-focussed (for example: Green, 2010, cited in Stidder and Griggs, 2013; Marriott, 2013). This change is dynamic and can impact on how communities interact socially. Conversely, changes in the way people socially interact can also affect leisure participation and the types of leisure activities people might participate in. However, recent research has suggested that leisure may be a fertile arena to harness social capital because it often encourages social interaction (for example: Glover and Hemingway, 2005). What happens to social capital in a more individual-focussed world?

In the leisure and social capital literatures, there are calls to identify what type of contexts might build social capital into the future (for example: Glover et al., 2005, Schuller, 2007, referring to the work of NESF, 2003). This chapter explores this premise. It explores how informal leisure spaces and activities – known in this thesis as *informal leisure contexts* – may be contexts to engage in contemporary, or even new forms of, social capital. As discussed in the previous chapter, there is a need for the practitioner (and the policy maker) to gain a better understanding of how to navigate an increasingly individual-orientated leisure participation environment. Therefore, an exploration of how contemporary social ties are formed in informal leisure contexts assists to better understand how to create contemporary social capital.

This chapter first examines the changing nature of leisure participation and the increasing focus on the concept of *place* in shaping the way people interact. It then illuminates what social capital is and how a dynamic, more individual-focussed society might be better interpreted by looking at the strength of social ties between

individuals rather than groups. The chapter is concluded by articulating a social leisure in place framework that is utilised for the empirical research in this thesis.

## **2.2 The Social Context: The Roles of Leisure and Place**

### ***2.2.1 Leisure: The Dynamic Concept***

People intuitively know what leisure is and what it looks like (Purrington and Hickerson, 2013). It means different things to different people (Edginton et al., 1995) and the perceptions of it change over time (Juniu, 2009).

It is evident in the leisure literatures that there exists a multiplicity of definitions of leisure. While stimulating leisure debate, multiple definitions may as well mean the same as having no definition (Purrington and Hickerson, 2013). Veal (1992) locates dozens of definitions of leisure in his article entitled '*Definitions of Leisure and Recreation*' but struggles to find consistent ones.

Edginton et al. (1995) bypass an attempt to define what leisure is to provide an intergenerational perspective: our great-grandparents viewed leisure as frivolous, our grandparents viewed leisure as refreshment, our parents viewed leisure as work to play and the young adults of the mid-1990s viewed leisure as work hard, play hard. Given that Putnam's (2000) rather negative view on the role of technology in creating an increasingly sedentary and less-social lifestyle, it would be interesting to know what the authors (Edginton et al., 1995) would consider as to the perspective on leisure of today's young adults. Are they work hard, play hard people like the young adults of 1995 or has the world moved on again? Drawing attention to these perspectives demonstrates the changing nature of leisure and its role in people's lives. The authors of this text note extensively the benefits of leisure on society but make it quite clear that leisure means different things to different people.

Daly (2000), a recreation planner in Australia, argues that the identification of words rather than definitions may be more appropriate – for example: free time, activity, competition, social, state of being, satisfaction, peak experience, fun and enjoyment and play. *A Handbook of Leisure Studies* (Rojek et al., 2006) pulls together leading leisure scholars from around the globe to discuss perspectives on leisure. This collection of chapters by leaders in their fields elucidates the multi-disciplinary, and often interdisciplinary, nature of leisure studies and promotes the benefits of leisure to disciplines such as economics, sociology, geography and public policy. However, this handbook does not attempt to define the term leisure.

In the same year as the above-mentioned text, the third edition of *Australian Leisure* was published (Lynch and Veal, 2006). The introductory section of the text commences with “what is this thing called *leisure*?” (p. 1)<sup>5</sup>. It scopes out leisure but argues that “some definitions [of leisure] reflect an attempt to overcome the complexities ... in one all-embracing statement, which then becomes unwieldy” (p. 25). The authors go on to state (ibid.):

A more succinct style of definition, which encompasses most aspects of leisure dealt in this book, is offered by Roberts (1978:3), who describes leisure as ‘...relatively freely undertaken non-work activity’.

Veal has since reaffirmed this definition (see Veal, 2010, p. 4). However, terms such as ‘relatively’, ‘freely’ and ‘non-work’ do not come without their own limitations.

Purrington and Hickerson (2013) suggest that there may as well be no definition of the word ‘leisure’ as leisure definitions come with limitations. They say that it is more of a phenomenon of interest rather than a word and (pp. 130-131):

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<sup>5</sup> Emphasis by Lynch and Veal (2006).

## Chapter Two – Literature Review

[L]eisure is behaviour that differs from culture-specific behaviours closely related to immediate survival and other practical necessities of life.

This is a vague definition that brings in yet more complexities. It raises more questions such as where is the divide between eating as leisure and eating as a practical necessity and when does leisure become work (for example: professional sports people, hobbyist musicians, travel writers)?

This thesis concentrates on the less-structured, more informal versions of leisure. It does so because it affords a context for looser affiliations and there are scholars who want to know more about contexts (for example: Schuller, 2007, referring to the work of NESF, 2003). To do this, a better understanding of the scope of informal leisure contexts is required. Even though “every society has its formal and informal leisure social formations and institutions which bring people together in their free time” (Blackshaw, 2010, p. 196), contemporary leisure texts and articles seem to avoid definitive terms like ‘formal leisure’ and ‘informal leisure’. Indeed, more recently the distinction between formal and informal activity in leisure seems immaterial. It is simply ‘leisure’.

To find understanding of these terms in a contemporary context one is required to look outside of the leisure discipline into fields of study such as youth, education, health and ageing to describe the contemporary formal/informal structure of leisure (for example: King et al., 2009, Abbott, 2010, Adams et al., 2011). These disciplines appear to be trying to grapple with the role of informal leisure and how to define it whereas the leisure discipline appears to have moved on. These disciplines appear to see the important role of leisure to their fields and its intrinsic value but are adopting older terms from the leisure discipline. It appears that the language of informal and formal leisure is not prominent in contemporary leisure texts leading to a disjuncture between the leisure discipline and others.

For example, a useful and succinct description of formal and informal leisure comes from King et al. (2009, p. 110) in the education discipline:

Formal activities are organised or structured activities involving rules or goals, which often have a formally designated leader, coach, or instructor, whereas informal activities are more spontaneous in nature (i.e. have little or no prior planning).

Adams et al. (2011, p. 684), writing for the ageing studies discipline, scope informal leisure as “interacting socially with familiar people such as relatives, friends or neighbours” and formal leisure as “participation in formal groups and organisations”. They also scope a third category of *solitary* leisure that is defined by “activities one does alone like reading, television viewing and many hobbies” (p. 684). Janke et al. (2006), in scoping formal and informal leisure for the *Americans’ Changing Lives* longitudinal study conducted by the *Inter-University Consortium for Political and Social Research* (see House, 2003), suggest that: “informal leisure consisted of activities such as socializing with friends and family, including visits with others and telephone conversations” (p. 286) and describe formal leisure as “activities involving participation in clubs and organizations (e.g., religious groups and community activities)” (p. 287). Smith et al. (2006, p. 116) position informal leisure activity as “free-time activity conducted outside formal group arrangements, as alone or in ephemeral collectivities or informal groups”.

Coming back to the field of leisure studies, another way to look at the fuzzy lines between the informal versus formal context is through the work of Stebbins (for example: 1982, 1992, 1997, 2000, 2006). His work has led a wave of research into the ‘seriousness’ of various leisure pursuits. Stebbins (1982) developed the concept of *serious leisure*. He scopes serious leisure as a “systematic pursuit of an amateur, hobbyist, or volunteer activity that participants find so substantial and interesting that, in the typical case, they launch themselves on a career centred on acquiring and expressing its special skills, knowledge and experience” (2006, p. 448). The less formal forms of leisure activity are conceptualised as *casual leisure* (for example:

Stebbins, 1997). Stebbins (2006, p. 448) describes casual leisure as “the immediately intrinsically rewarding, relatively short-lived pleasurable activity requiring little or no special training to enjoy it”. He includes activities such as play, relaxation, passive and active entertainment, sociable conversation and sensory stimulation as types of casual leisure activity (Stebbins, 1997, 2006). These examples have some alignment with the scoping of informal leisure stated previously.

Stebbins (2008, p. 5) considers casual leisure as “considerably less substantial” than serious leisure. He does, however, describe casual leisure as “a distinctive activity in itself and an important part of the contemporary leisure scene” (Stebbins, 1997, p. 17). Is casual leisure less substantial than serious leisure? Arguably, this would depend on each person’s interpretation of what substantial means to them. A review of 44 articles on social and leisure activity in the ageing studies discipline by Adams et al. (2011, p. 683) found that “informal social activity has accumulated the most evidence of an influence on wellbeing”.

Analysing several studies in the UK, Richards (2010, p. 12) suggests that “leisure has become individualised”. Richards (2011, p. 6) argues that an “important feature of contemporary leisure practices is the high degree of self-organisation involved” and that this “becoming more important ... as a response to the need for greater fluidity in our lives”. Data on Canadian sports participation demonstrate a shift toward more informal sports activities (Ifedi, 2008, cited in Richards, 2011) while Dutch Time Use Survey data from 1975-2005 highlights a much smaller rise (24 percent to 27 percent) in formal sports than in informal sports (doubling from nine percent to 18 percent).

In discussing the work of Green (2010, p. 194), Stidder and Griggs (2013) describe trends in youth sport and physical activity that suggest that the more individual and informal forms of sporting and leisure activities have increased in popularity in the last forty years. Green (2010, cited in Stidder and Griggs, 2013) observes that the less formal types of recreational activities are becoming more appealing. Marriott

(2013, p. 57) suggests that there is an increase in informal leisure participation in contemporary Australian society when he notes there is a “trend toward participation in non-competitive and passive activities rather than traditional formal sports” coupled with “dramatic falls in a number of traditional team and small group sports”.

Unfortunately, in the Australian context, there are limited data sets specifically aimed at detailing this as most data sets focus on changes in particular activities rather than moves towards other activities. Veal (2005, p. 38) notes that “unfortunately, due to changes in survey design, it has not been possible to monitor trends in participation over time” and that the picture is fragmented. Upon reviewing leisure participation data from 1985-2002 in Australia, Veal (2003, p. 245) found that “despite the expenditure of considerable public resources on numerous surveys, information on general trends in leisure participation in Australia over time does not exist”. A lack of consistency in survey design and collection during that period led Veal to state that “*no data exist on trends in leisure participation in Australia over time*”<sup>6</sup>.

The *Exercise, Recreation and Sport Survey* (see Dale and Ford, 2002, Standing Committee on Recreation and Sport, 2002, 2003, 2005, 2006, 2008, 2009, 2010a, 2010b, 2011) does shed some helpful insight into changing leisure participation. The ERASS was a ten year longitudinal study conducted by the Australian Sports Commission on behalf of all state government sport and recreation departments in Australia. This survey provides data relating to organised and non-organised physical activity. The survey was conducted via a Computer Assisted Telephone Interviewing method Australia-wide targeting people aged 15 years and over. According to the Standing Committee on Recreation and Sport (2011, p. 1), the focus was on collecting

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<sup>6</sup> Emphasis by Veal (2003)



data on participation in both organised<sup>7</sup> and non-organised<sup>8</sup> physical activity, which includes:

[A]ctivities that were organised by a club, association or other type of organisation, and those activities that were non-organised, but excludes those activities that were part of household or garden duties, or were part of work.

During the ten year study it was revealed that the “regular participation rate<sup>9</sup> in organised physical activity increased only slightly between 2001 and 2010 (three percentage points for both males and females)” (p. 3). However, the significant increase was in non-organised activity in that the “regular participation rate in non-organised physical activity increased 11 percentage points between 2001 and 2010” (p. 2). Importantly, the study found:

[T]he regular participation rate in organised physical activity also increased in the same period, but the increase was small. Overall increases in physical activity were mainly due to the increase in non-organised participation.

A study undertaken by Sport and Recreation Tasmania (2010, p. 16) found:

[R]ecent years have seen a far greater recognition of arts and cultural pursuits, non-competitive social and recreational activities and most importantly, the critical contribution which leisure and recreation make to the health and wellbeing in the community.

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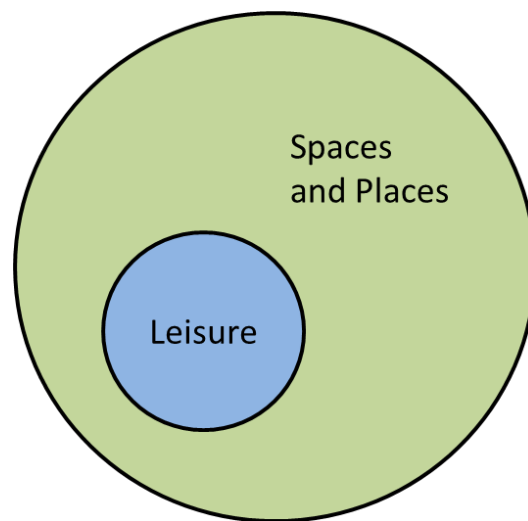
<sup>7</sup> Organised physical activity is defined by the Standing Committee on Recreation and Sport (2011, p. 3) as “physical activity for exercise, recreation or sport that was organised in full or in part by (1) a fitness, leisure or indoor sports centre that required payment for participation, (2) a sport or recreation club or association that required payment of membership, fees or registration, (3) a workplace, (4) a school, or (5) any other type of organisation”.

<sup>8</sup> Non-organised physical activity is defined by the Standing Committee on Recreation and Sport (2011, p. 2) as “physical activity for exercise, recreation or sport that was non-organised in full or in part (that is, not fully organised by a club, association or other type of organisation)”.

<sup>9</sup> Regular participation rate is defined by the Standing Committee on Recreation and Sport (2011, p. 7) as “Persons who participated in at least one physical activity for exercise, recreation or sport at least three times per week on average”.

Why might a shift toward participation in informal leisure be occurring? Influencing this shift, the contemporary lifestyles of people nowadays are affected by different external factors than they have in the past (for example: NESF, 2003). The shift toward less-structured forms of leisure might be explained by a desire for individual pursuits that better meet the needs of people's time poor lives. Society has changed (Deery and Jago, 2010). Blackshaw and Long (2005, p. 244) describe our "increasingly privatised leisure lifestyles" as "cocooning". A study by Gibson and Stewart (2009, p. 33) found that "the rapid pace of modern life, longer-working hours and competing demands on time were limiting the capacities of people of all ages to volunteer and contribute". Influences like changes in the family structure, work-life balance, technological advances, increased affluence for some sectors and urban population change are examples of levers at work that can affect leisure participation (Marriott, 2013). The NESF (2003, p. 108) reveal that "people who spend the bulk of their time working and commuting have less time to engage locally". Work/life balance is a challenge (Reichwein and Gow, 2013) and affects participation in time-specific activities that normally fit into the nine-to-five routines.

Leisure is seen as a significant driver for participation in communities (for example: volunteerism), plays a role in reducing social barriers (for example: disabilities, ethnic minority segregation, age) and can build social capital through strengthening social ties (McLean and Hurd, 2011). However, if leisure is moving toward more informal forms of activity this makes the study of informal leisure integral to understanding the trajectory of civic participation and engagement. In addition, if leisure participation is changing then what does this mean for the practitioner and the policy maker? It forces a rethink of how to engage in the leisure sphere in a dynamic context of community activity. Importantly for the practitioner and the policy maker, leisure is spatially dependent (see Figure 1).



**Figure 1 – Leisure in Spaces and Places**

Leisure happens in spaces and places whether they are physical or virtual ones. The spatial factor is a lever that can be pulled by both the practitioner and the policy maker, particularly those in local government. To understand the spatial influence on leisure, understanding the concepts of space and place becomes integral.

### ***2.2.2 Spatial Factors in Contemporary Leisure***

Over twenty years ago, Ostrom (1990) argued that common-pool resources, like public spaces where leisure is often facilitated, can be managed for multiple use but they need appropriate policy making and enforcement around them to ensure their sustainable use. The push for multi-use of these localised spaces is still operating under a similar context. For example, according to Inspiring Place Pty Ltd and HM Leisure Planning Pty Ltd (2010, p. 9), an issue facing Tasmania is:

[T]he slow recognition of the need to apply contemporary planning practice and societal concerns into open space planning (e.g. climate change, social inclusion), moving away from the traditional model of sport and recreation facility provision (e.g. single purpose, single user facilities) to a state-wide system of built and natural environments, aimed at improving the quality of life for Tasmanians on a range of levels.

A movement within and around this arena is a shift to a focus on the concept of 'place' in shaping communities. Understanding place factors incorporates more than just the physical space. According to the Project for Public Spaces (2014):

Placemaking facilitates creative patterns of activities and connections (cultural, economic, social, ecological) that define a place and support its ongoing evolution. Placemaking is how people are more collectively and intentionally shaping our world, and our future on this planet.

It is around the concept of 'place' that governments are increasingly exploring the dynamics of the changing face of community participation and wellbeing. Place management is a relatively new approach to urban planning. According to Ker (2008, p. 23), place management "is what land use planning aspires to be". It "is the means by which the unexpected can be invited to appear and to be nurtured whilst maintaining and enhancing what is already valued in a place". This is particularly relevant to addressing the changing nature of leisure participation.

Governments are adopting place management methodologies. A key principle behind this is that it "involves looking to, listening to and engaging the input of the people who live, work and play in a particular place to understand their needs and aspirations" (Metropolitan Local Government Review Panel, 2011). This is an adaptive and dynamic process relevant to the current context of leisure. For example, it brings government departments together to build communities in an

integrated policy space (Department of Planning and Community Development, 2008). The essence of place management is relatively simple (Warren, 2008, p. 26):

The key for sound place management is in identifying those elements which lead to better outcomes for society as a whole and incorporating them into the built environment.

If an approach by governments is looking to enhancing spaces and places that are shaped by community needs and wants, it makes the concept of place integral to the future provision of leisure services. Importantly, “since, place is the site where capitals [social, economic, human and natural] are often formed and where the dynamics are played out the management of place again becomes a public policy issue” (Adams, 2008, p. 17).

While an exploration of the bodies of knowledge around place management, placemaking, placeshaping and the like are not part of the empirical work of this thesis, the underpinning concept of place is. Place is becoming a lens for understanding leisure participation in contemporary society. Leisure happens in spaces and places so it must become a key influence on shaping leisure. The concept of place becomes yet another window to view the practitioner’s dilemma of how to plan for and deliver use of resources for leisure into the future.

The concept of place has its foundations in the geography discipline but it is also found in numerous other disciplines and fields of research such as political science, sociology, regional development, philosophy, psychology and anthropology, all of which have a different perspective on what place is. While this does make its conceptualisation difficult, it does emphasise its effect on various aspects of people’s lives and the ways the world can be viewed.

Importantly for leisure researchers, Kalandides (2011, p. 37) states that “place and space are not identical”. The words space and place are often used interchangeably

but are actually fundamentally different in their meanings. In discussing the work of Stokowski (2002), Kyle et al. (2004, p. 213) find that “places are more than geographic settings with definitive physical and textual characteristics; they are fluid, changeable, dynamic contexts of social interaction and memory”.

The tweet below (Project for Public Spaces, 2013a) communicates part of a presentation made by Mr Peter Smith, the CEO of the Adelaide City Council, at a 2013 meeting of the Placemaking Leadership Council (see Project for Public Spaces, 2013b). Smith’s basic premise is that place is about people. Practitioners like Smith are increasingly speaking the place language.



Kyle and Chick (2007, p. 211) refer to the work of the geographer Tuan (1977) in that he “distinguished between space and place by suggesting ‘What begins as undifferentiated space becomes place as we get to know it better and endow it with value’ (p. 6)”. From this argument, space becomes place when value is placed on it by people and spending time in place is integral to this. To enlighten further, Adams (2008, p. 17) states that “place has always been associated with identity and our early experiences of the world and therefore has an intrinsic ‘value’ to all people”. Spaces become places when they gain personality and spirit (Tuan, 1979).

Steele (1981 in Cross, 2001, p. 1) enunciates that *sense of place* is “the particular experience of a person in a particular setting (feeling stimulated, excited, joyous,

expansive, and so forth)". How does one 'sense' it? According to Lentini and Decortis (2010, p. 408), "...in terms of *people's experience*, sense of place refers to the fact that *people apprehend physical space not only through the perception of its spatial characteristics, but also through the awareness of the social cues related to it.*"<sup>10</sup> Grogan et al. (1995, pp. 16-17) argue that it is instinctive:

A sense of place is a discernable quality of some environments. We instinctively know when it is absent – places that feel like they belong to no-one. And we instinctively know when it is present – a people's square or a small creek where we go to read and reflect.

It appears that people intuitively know and are aware of when a space has become a place. However, places are complex systems (Ker, 2008), making their understanding difficult. Stokowski (2002, p. 371) questions, "If a 'place' is not merely an objective site with physical features, though, what else is it?" and suggests that the concepts of "place and sense of place are ... socially constructed" (p. 368). Memmott and Long (2002, p. 40) argue that "properties of place are transmitted socially". Social construction can be spatial (Lashua and Kelly, 2008) and there exists a "phenomenological understanding of a place as a distinctive coming together in space" (Agnew, 2011, p. 317). This creates an interesting insight for leisure policy when there are practitioners calling for spatial planning processes to be utilised to assist with social inclusion (for example: Russell, 2013).

One way to look at it is (Stokowski, 2002, p. 374):

Understanding the social construction of place and sense of place re-focuses thinking away from the taken-for-granted physical characteristics of space, and toward the possibility that places are always in the process of being created, always provisional and uncertain, and always capable of being discursively manipulated toward desired (individual or collective) ends.

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<sup>10</sup> Emphasis by Lentini and Decortis (2010)

Steele (1981 in Cross, 2001, p. 13) propound that “to some degree we create our own place, they do not exist independent of us”. Kalandides (2011, p. 30) argues that there are a set of actors in places stating: “The ‘set of actors and relations’ and the way that those interact with the physical environment are indeed unique in each place”. This is a similar argument to the approach to social capital developed by Coleman (1988) where actors play particular roles within social structures making each network have its own distinct qualities. This argument suggests that understanding the construction of places may assist researchers to better understand the role of actors in social networks.

Leisure affords a context to enact this. This poses the question as to what types of social spaces and places might be the context for facilitating contemporary social ties that can build social capital. This leads to an argument to be made that: *better understanding the link between leisure and place may also assist researchers to better understand social capital*. This is because, as discussed, leisure is spatial and often social, and places are social constructions.

A theory that explores the social construction of leisure in place and yields further insights is Oldenburg’s theory of ‘third place’ (see Oldenburg and Brissett, 1982, Oldenburg, 1989, 1991, 1996, 1999, 2001a). The argument is that third places facilitate opportunities for meeting with a mix of people, to build social connections and networks that contribute to fostering social capital (Williams and Pocock 2009). Third place theory may assist to scope future public leisure services and their role in civic engagement. The third place literature affords a framework to examine leisure in social settings and a process of assessing this. It is a lens in which to view this dynamic.



### **2.2.3 Third Places are Social Places of Leisure**

According to third place theory, there exists three places for an individual. “A ‘Third Place’ is not home (the ‘first place’) and it’s not work/school (the ‘second place’). It is a place where anyone can go to socialize” (Lawson, 2004, p. 125). Examples of traditional third places are cafés, coffee shops, bookstores, bars and hair salons (Oldenburg, 1999). They are prevalent in most urban centres. Specifically, Oldenburg’s third place theory is based around places as social constructions with leisure as a key focal point.

Oldenburg (1999) attributes eight characteristics to third places. These characteristics are:

1. On neutral ground
2. The third place is a leveler [sic]
3. Conversation is the main activity
4. Accessibility and accommodation
5. The regulars
6. A low profile
7. The mood is playful
8. A home away from home

Mehta and Bosson (2010, p. 779) state that Oldenburg “defines a *third place* as a place of refuge other than the home or workplace where people can regularly visit and commune with friends, neighbors, coworkers, and even strangers”.<sup>11</sup> Third places are ‘homelike’ where conversation is important and everyone is equal (Slater and Koo, 2010). Third places can provide voluntary contact with a diverse range of people in casual places (Kivisto, 2011) that can invoke pride and sense of place; in essence, social inclusion (see Lawson, 2004). They are homes away from home

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<sup>11</sup> Emphasis by Mehta and Bosson (2010).

(Oldenburg, 1999) and places to escape to (Glover and Parry, 2009). They are spaces where people can hang out or drop into (Slater and Koo, 2010) and they are social places (Mehta and Bosson, 2010) where people can “gather primarily to enjoy each other’s company” (Oldenburg and Brissett, 1982, p. 269). According to Oldenburg and Brissett (1982, p. 268), “The ‘escape theme’ is common, in discussions of the third place, permeating descriptions of the tavern and the coffee houses in novels, documentaries, travelogues, and community case studies”.

Third places encourage lingering (Oldenburg, 1999). Fundamental for creating opportunities of social interaction, these places have a light-hearted atmosphere, are informal, relatively inexpensive, welcoming, friendly and allow a blend of people no matter their status or ethnicity (Oldenburg, 1999, Lawson, 2004). Third places are comfortable spaces where one feels safe and secure like they might in their own home, conversation is important and everyone is equal (Slater and Koo, 2010). People may meet with and make new friends within third places, but there is minimal, if at all, evidence of a host. They are neutral spaces with a light-hearted mood where people can just be themselves with few or no demands (Oldenburg, 1999). Boredom is only for those who do not participate. The conversation is emotional and, in the main, relatively un-spiteful (Oldenburg and Brissett, 1982).

The regularity of visiting spaces may be defined in many different ways and people can derive the same benefits that remain with them until the next visit, be it weekly, annually or anywhere in between. Lingering in a third place and having more experience within them increases the chance of third place identification for the individual (Oldenburg, 1999). It is the incidental experiences shared in the space that creates a desire to return and this urge, in effect, underpins the making of a third place (Oldenburg, 1999). Slater and Koo (2010) suggest that frequency of attendance has a correlation to the likeliness of the place becoming a third place. For this reason, third places are often recognised by the existence of *regulars* (Oldenburg, 1999). In discussing the research of Oldenburg (1990, 2001a), Rosenbaum (2006, p. 59) states that “third places are usually patronized by a group

of regular customers”. These regulars are a form of what Coleman (1988), when discussing social capital, would call an actor. Oldenburg (1991, p. 35) provides an example of the regulars:

The third place gang need only know that a newcomer is a decent sort, capable of giving and taking in conversation according to the modes of civility and mutual respect that hold sway among them, and the group needs some assurance that the new face is going to become a familiar one. This kind of trust grows with each visit.

“Friends can be numerous and often only met if they may easily join and depart one another’s company” (Oldenburg, 1989, p. 163). One who enters the third place “may chance to meet the friend of a friend” (Oldenburg and Brissett, 1982, p. 275). The novelty of being able to drift in and out at one’s leisure, mingling with a diverse range of people, can enhance community spirit and bring one closer to the community. It is a different type of access than membership of a club enables. Third places can be *levellers* because they are inclusive places and all are equal within the space (Oldenburg, 1999). Tiu (2012) refers to them as *equalizers*. As a result of levelling, these places are ports of entry where friendship and acceptance can be obtained, young people and adults can associate, cost of living pressures can be reduced and mutual aid and information can be acquired (Oldenburg, 1996, 1999). The essence of third place can be applied and may be evident in numerous social spaces. Oldenburg (1996) identifies these spaces as being relevant to bring a balance to people’s lives.

It is the anticipation of incidental experiences in a third place that Oldenburg (1999) suggests makes people want to return to the place. Moreover, the novelty of being in a place with such a diverse range of people is often absent in people’s daily lives. Users of these places can express their “unique sense of individuality” as these spaces can “often uniquely provide a common meeting ground for people with diverse backgrounds and experiences” (Oldenburg and Brissett, 1982, p. 275). Third places can also aid in positive mental health outcomes (Oldenburg, 1996). However,

third places are vulnerable to their surrounding urban environment. Not all what Oldenburg (1999, p. 203) calls “habitats” are conducive to a thriving third place. This is because habitats that do not encourage the sharing of spaces and experiences are not conducive to third place identification (Oldenburg, 1999). Oldenburg (1999) ascribes aspects of communities such as the culture of the local environment, casual atmospheres, evidence of ‘free-range’ people and street activity, access to education and the inclusion of young people can play a role in creating contexts for third places to thrive.

A third place, as described by Oldenburg (1999) and others, does *host social leisure in place*. It is a social leisure setting with place characteristics. The problem, however, for the future of third places is that the world has changed. As Jacke (2009, p. 332) says: “What Oldenburg defines as third places of socialization between family and work as well as their modes of socialization have changed over time”. The world is now a profoundly different social setting and the perception of leisure is constantly evolving. Within this dynamic global change, Oldenburg (1996) propounds that third places are vanishing. This poses the question as to whether they are vanishing or actually being reconceptualised. If so, what is the role of third places in contemporary society? Can they only be conceptualised by the likes of the corner pub?

Like Blackshaw and Long (2005), Oldenburg (2001b, p. 5) also argues that Americans are increasingly cocooning themselves in a consumer society. People’s homes are better equipped for leisure and are more entertaining than they might have been (Oldenburg, 2001b). Adding to this, Esch (2008) suggests that home-themed lifestyle shows are a link to the cocooning trend as they link to the love of home and Park (2009) suggests people are becoming digital zombies through digital cocooning. These propositions are at the core of Putnam’s (1995) issue with television partly causing the decline in social capital. Similarly, Oldenburg (1996, p. 6) stated: “What suburbia cries for are the means for people to gather easily, inexpensively, regularly and pleasurably – a ‘place on the corner’, real life alternatives to television”.

Thibault (2008) argues that a cocooning society plays a role in depriving communities of the benefits of civic leisure.

Yet even thirty years ago, Oldenburg suggested opportunities to utilise and personalise third places to overcome the loss of certain community conditions (Oldenburg and Brissett, 1982). Oldenburg (1996, p. 6) argues that “‘third places’ lend a public balance to the increased privatization of home life” even though “key ingredients seem to remain elusive and emergent and no doubt change with shifting patterns of life style” (Oldenburg and Brissett, 1982, p. 270).

It is, therefore, opportune to ask if new forms of third places – new places ‘on the corner’ – could emerge to counteract the cocooning effect. Studies have emerged in recent years that explore what might be emerging third places. These have all been places of leisure with social foci. Studies into the on-line environment (for example: Baker-Eveleth et al., 2005, Soukup, 2006, Moore et al., 2009, Foster, 2013), attendance at cultural and sporting venues (for example: Jacke, 2009, Mair, 2009, Slater and Koo, 2010), community markets (for example: Tiemann, 2008), health intervention (for example: Glover and Parry, 2009) and housing estates (for example: Williams and Pocock, 2009) all suggest this may be the case and counteract Oldenburg’s (1996) concern that third places are vanishing. What Oldenburg (1999) does identify is that more attention needs to be paid to third places as the predominant focus of research has been on activities and groups and not the spaces where people can remedy their own “stress, loneliness, and alienation” (p. 20). It follows that if place factors assist in shaping social and human capital (see Doyle and Welsh, 2008) but traditional third places where these can occur are vanishing (Oldenburg, 1996) then identification of possible or potential new forms of third spaces is particularly useful.

However, the essence of third place conceptualisation through its eight characteristics assists to identify these social leisure settings. This is important for this thesis as it provides a lens to explicate spatial social ties built through informal

leisure – a spatial, place-based focus to better understand leisure and social capital. If third places are changing (or even vanishing as suggested previously by Oldenburg) then an investigation into the changing social and leisure contexts can also provide insight back into third place theory.

### ***2.2.4 Linking Leisure and Place to Social Capital – An Introduction***

Rutten et al. (2010, p. 863) reveal that social networks have a spatial dimension that has “received little attention in the literature so far”. This thesis affords attention to this spatial dimension. It is established in this thesis that third places are social constructions where leisure activities play out in an array of forms. Society needs spaces to participate in social leisure activities to conduct important transactions in social capital. Coleman (1988) argues the importance of the role of actors within these social networks. It is within social settings that actors trade in social capital. As discussed, within third places are social actors known as regulars. They are place-based actors to transact with. Importantly for the practitioner and the policy maker, the “policy potential [of social capital] should relate to, and reflect, the specific local context” (NESF 2003, p. 115).

In the next section of this thesis, an exploration of social capital in the context of a dynamic, contemporary society is undertaken. This is because it is put forward that social capital is an outcome of leisure activities (Putnam, 2000). Understanding who are conducting these transactions, what is being transacted, how they are being transacted and where, assists to provide answers to the practitioner’s dilemma. An exploration of social capital theory provides insight into how informal leisure contexts can act as conduits for fostering social capital. Furthermore, an examination of Granovetter’s (1973, 1983) strength of weak ties (SWT) theory adds value to analysing the effect of contemporary social change. This next section scaffolds social capital and SWT theories to the framework being built for this thesis.

## 2.3 The Strength of Weak Ties in the Contemporary Social Context

### 2.3.1 Perspectives on Social Capital

Social capital is well documented by researchers as an outcome from social activities and is the value created from social networks. Sabatini (2008, p. 466) explains that “we have witnessed a real explosion of the number of studies addressing the social roots of development, often grouped together under the common label of ‘social capital’”. When studying social capital there are three seminal perspectives, namely those of Bourdieu, Coleman and Putnam. This section illustrates the underpinnings of these perspectives to explore the development of this hotly contested concept.

Bourdieu is often regarded as the first seminal author on social capital (Schuller et al., 2000). His work, initially, centred on a concept called *habitus*. It is “the system of structured, structuring dispositions” (Bourdieu, 1980, p. 52). The socialisation through the habitus emphasises “the skills and the ways of looking at the world that people inherited from the unequal objective social structures around them” (Scott and Marshall, 2009, p. 50). The habitus, in effect, guides our behaviours through socialised norms and is influenced by societal structures such as class, gender and ethnicity. A person’s capital results from the interaction between their institutional field and their habitus (Scott and Marshall, 2009). Forms of capital such as social, cultural and economic assist to define the role of the individual within any social field.

Social capital, as conceptualised by Bourdieu (1984), derives its base from the habitus and it heavily influences one’s symbolic capital<sup>12</sup> (Lawler, 2011). Bourdieu describes social capital as “the sum of the resources, actual or virtual, that accrue to an individual or a group by virtue of possessing a durable network of more or less

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<sup>12</sup> Symbolic capital includes sub-types (for example: cultural capital, linguistic capital, scientific capital). It has intrinsic value rather than the non-intrinsic value of economic capital (see Moore, 2012).

institutionalized relations of mutual acquaintance and recognition” (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992, p. 119, cited in Lesser, 2000, p. 91). Yet social capital remains elusive in Bourdieu’s work (Schuller et al., 2000). Bourdieu’s concept of social capital is embedded in the notion that actors are engaged in a struggle to achieve their interests (Siisiäinen, 2000). Given Bourdieu’s focus on class reproduction through capitals, an issue that his conceptualisation of social capital faces is the evident changing of the traditional class structure. Analysis of the data collected in *The Great British Class Survey* uncovered that there are no longer three horizontal classes (upper, middle and lower) but seven, with several of the new classes running vertically through traditional class structures (BBC, 2013).

Coleman (1988) delivered a North American perspective to the social capital debate. His work around educational attainment and the acquisition of human capital through social capital is seminal in social capital research. Gauntlett (2011b) describes Coleman’s approach to social capital as similar to Bourdieu’s in that it links social capital with economics, but different in that it is not centred on the upper class as the source of social capital. He observes (p. 3):

Coleman’s approach leads to a broader view of social capital, where it is not seen only as stock held by powerful elites, but notes its value for all kinds of communities, including the powerless and marginalised.

According to Coleman (1988), social capital is a resource utilised to acquire and distribute resources, for example human capital<sup>13</sup> and financial capital<sup>14</sup>. While Bourdieu does not talk about trust as a component of social capital (Siisiäinen, 2000), Coleman discusses the need for resources such as trustworthiness, obligations, norms, information channels, effective sanctions and expectations within social structures.

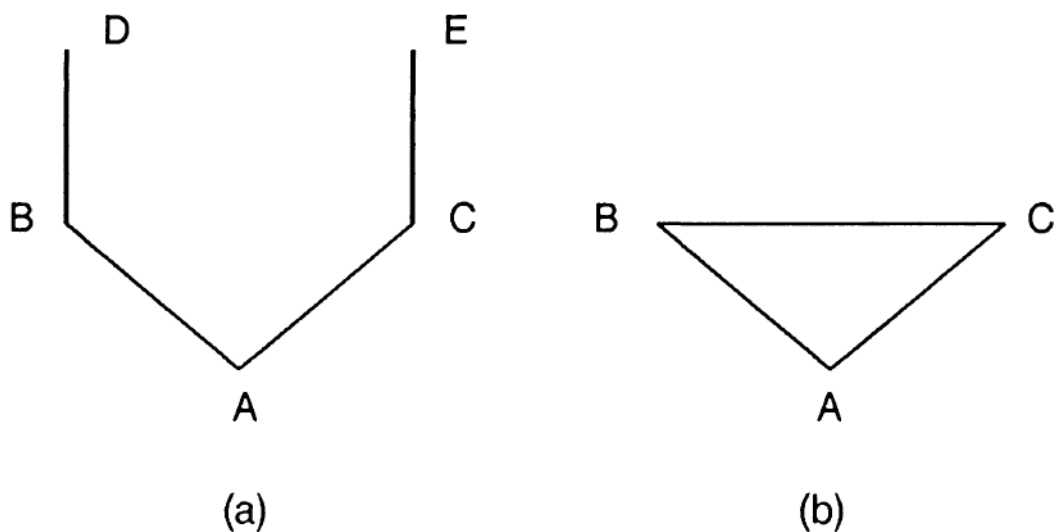
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<sup>13</sup> “Human capital is approximately measured by parents’ education and provides the potential for a cognitive environment for the child that aids learning” (Coleman, 1988, p. 109).

<sup>14</sup> “Financial capital is approximately measured by the family’s wealth or income. It provides the physical resources that can aid achievement: a fixed place in the home for studying, materials to aid learning, the financial resources that smooth family problems.” (Coleman, 1988, p. 109)



Coleman (1988) argues that network closure is required for the effective norm development and sanctioning as well as the building of trust. Figure 2 conceptualises this closure. In the second diagram (diagram (b)), persons A, B and C form a closed network where norms can be developed and sanctioned and trust can be built. Diagram (a) displays leakage where persons D and E are not directly linked together in the network and are only indirectly linked to person A via others. The network is not closed. This can stifle norms and trust.



**Figure 2 – Coleman's Visualisation of a Network Without (a) and With (b) Closure  
(Coleman, 1988, p. 106)**

An evident issue in this demonstration for contemporary understanding of social capital is the changing nature of social networking where weaker bonds are prevalent and larger, looser networks are formed (social media). Portes (1998) argues that Coleman overemphasised the dense ties and neglected the weaker ones.

According to Coleman (1988), social capital has two elements: social structures and the facilitation of the actions of actors within that structure. Coleman (p. 302) argues:

Social capital is defined by its function. It is not a single entity, but a variety of different entities having two characteristics in common: They all consist of some aspect of social structure, and they facilitate certain actions of individuals who are within the structure.

Coleman's description of the *actor* and their actions in the social capital realm is pivotal to his contribution. Actors pursue goals that are a reflection of the perceived self-interest of the actor (Monroe and Maher, 1995). This is similar to that of Bourdieu's (1986) actor, however they are not exclusively of upper class origin. Coleman's socialised, rational actors have their actions shaped by social factors such as norms, rules and obligations. Coleman (1988, p. 98) states that "social capital inheres in the structure of relations between actors and among actors".

Putnam popularised social capital theory in the 1990s (Gauntlett, 2011b) with his portrayal of America's declining social capital. Putnam's work on social capital is not as sketchy as that of Bourdieu and Coleman. It has made social capital "globally accessible and policy relevant" (Schuller et al., 2000, p. 12) and has led policy interest toward the concept of social capital. Putnam's conceptualisation of social capital is as a collective asset where Coleman and Bourdieu focus their attention more on the actor for the distribution of resources. Putnam focuses on societal level and concentrates on organised interests such as voluntary associations (Siisiäinen, 2000).

Mutual benefit, cooperation, coordination and social organisation are terms that are dominant in Putnam's conceptualisation of social capital. Social features such as networks, norms and trust underpin this (Putnam, 1995). He scopes social capital much more definitively than Bourdieu and Coleman had previously. His later work (Putnam, 2000) shifts thinking towards reciprocity where he "acknowledges that

people may have high levels of trust and yet be socially inactive or even antisocial” (Schuller et al., 2000, p. 11).

It is argued by Putnam that the more social capital a city or town possesses directly correlates to a greater capacity of communities to “overcome personal hardships, to access economic opportunities and to ensure effective government” (Adams and Hess, 2010, p. 10). Although, in contrast to the work of Bourdieu, one of the key criticisms of Putnam’s approach is the “remarkable absence of *power* and *politics*” (Navarro, 2002, p. 427)<sup>15</sup> where he ignores the role of power in communities (DeFilippis, 2001). While Bourdieu and Coleman have been criticised for their vagueness in definitions, Putnam has been criticised for his overtly positive view on social capital in that “he mostly ignores the in-group favouritism, aggressive competition, and bullying that can be fostered with like-minded groups, instead seeing social connections as typically warm, benevolent, and fruitful” (Gauntlett, 2011a). He focuses on social capital as the glue that binds rather than what Portes (1998) would describe as its inherent dark side – for example: the embedding of enclaves of deviant behaviour.

However, Putnam (2000) is probably best known for his popular conceptualisation of bonding and bridging forms of social capital. Bonding and bridging forms of social capital are described as the bonds within social groupings and the bridges between them respectively (Putnam, 1995). Bonding capital consists of the social ties that exist within structured groups and bridging capital consists of the social ties that connect groups.

Bonding social capital is akin to Coleman’s conceptualisation of a network with closure (see diagram (b) in Figure 2) in that it reinforces and perpetuates social capital resources such as trust and norms within the group. Bonding capital relates to “those relationships that you have with people like you” (ABS, 2004, p. 103). When discussing the early work of Granovetter (1973), the ABS states that “closely

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<sup>15</sup> Emphasis by Navarro (2002).

bonded groups are most likely to be trusting, share common values, and provide material and emotional support to members of the group” (p. 9). The ABS (p. 103) suggests:

[B]onding refers to those relationships that you have with people like you. It produces strong 'in-group' loyalty. (Woolcock, 2000) Bonding ties are described as the strong ties that develop between people of similar background and interests, usually include family and friends, provide material and emotional support, and are more inward-looking and protective.

In contrast (p. 103),

[B]ridging refers to relations with friends, associates and colleagues with different backgrounds, for example different socioeconomic status, age, generation, race or ethnicity. (Woolcock 2000) Bridging may also refer to those relationships where a single person or a small number of people are members of diverse groups.

According to Putnam (2000, p. 23), “Bonding capital constitutes a kind of sociological superglue, whereas bridging capital provides a sociological WD-40”. What Putnam is referring to here is that bonding capital holds groups together whereas bridging capital allows things to flow freely between groups. According to the bonding-bridging approach to social capital, both forms need to co-exist for a productive society. This is because “bridging ties facilitate the exchange of information between distinct groups” (Kavanaugh et al., 2005, p. 120). “Communities with bridging social capital (weak ties across groups) as well as bonding social capital (strong ties within groups) are most effective in organizing for collective action. People who belong to multiple groups act as bridging ties” (p. 119). To continue, “It has been argued that bonding social capital permits people to ‘get by’ whilst bridging social capital enables people to ‘get ahead’” (Weller, 2006, p. 559).

As discussed, Putnam appears to dismiss power from his social capital structure (Navarro, 2002). The horizontal nature of the framing of social capital can be counterproductive to social capital outcomes (Knack and Keefer, 1997 in DeFilippis, 2001). Bridging is, in effect, a horizontal metaphor that acknowledges that bridging capital brings people on similar levels of the power and status structure together (Szreter and Woolcock, 2004). In response to this, Woolcock and Szreter (for example: Woolcock, 2001, Szreter, 2002, Szreter and Woolcock, 2004) have led a charge towards acknowledging a third form of social capital – linking capital.

In discussing the work of the World Bank (2000), Woolcock (2001, p. 11) describes the key function of linking capital as the “capacity to leverage resources, ideas, and information from formal institutions beyond the community”. Linking capital affords access to other social structures of power through linking groups in the different layers in the social and power dynamic (ABS, 2004). It works vertically through power and status structures.

In exploring these seminal perspectives there are some commonalities and some structural differences. However, over time, key themes have developed as debate and further research have been conducted on social capital.

### ***2.3.2 Social Capital: The Attributes***

Social capital theorists have theorised that social capital is a means to establish social networks and social norms and is a way to get ahead (for example: Coleman, 1988, Fukuyama, 1999, Putnam, 2000, Woolcock and Narayan, 2000). As stated by Glover and Hemingway (2005, p. 392), “Putnam (1993) argued that voluntary cooperation is easier in communities with substantial stocks of social capital”.

Notwithstanding the body of work behind it, social capital remains a hotly contested concept. It is destined to become one of the essentially contested concepts like gender, race and class due to its political and ideological importance along the

political spectrum (Szreter and Woolcock, 2004). Van Ingen and Van Eijck (2009, p. 193) argue that “social capital has been the subject of dispute since different meanings are ascribed in different scholarly fields”. To add to this uncertainty, “there is considerable confusion about where social capital resides – at the level of the individual or the community (Uphoff, 2000)” (Blackshaw and Long, 2005, p. 250). The problem evidenced in the social capital literature is that there are complexities with conclusively defining what social capital actually is. “Social capital is not, however, a precise concept” (ABS, 2000), although there are some common themes that have developed over time. The Office of National Statistics (2001, p. 5) in London sums up the common themes:

There are many possible approaches to defining social capital much to the exasperation of anyone trying to research it. However there is some consensus within the social sciences towards a definition that emphasises the role of networks and civic norms (Healy, 2001). Social capital is generally perceived to be a private and public good (Putnam, 2000) because, through its creation as a by-product of social relations, it benefits both the creator and bystander. It is a classic public good because of its non-exclusivity – its benefits cannot be restricted and hence are available to all members of a community indiscriminately (Woolcock, 2001).

Coleman (1988, p. 98) suggests that “like other forms of capital, social capital is productive, making possible the achievement of certain ends that in its absence would not be possible”. Coleman (1988, p. 97) continues this argument when discussing research by Granovetter in stating that “there is a failure to recognize the importance of concrete personal relations and networks of relations – what he (Granovetter) calls ‘embeddedness’ – in generating trust, in establishing expectations, and in creating and enforcing norms”. One area of commonality evidenced in the literature is that “the basic idea of ‘social capital’ is that one’s family, friends, and associates constitute an important asset, one that can be called upon in a crisis, enjoyed for its own sake, and/or leveraged for material gain” (Woolcock, 2001, p. 3). In discussing the work of Putnam (2000), Blackshaw and

Long (2005, p. 243) suggest that “through social capital collective problems are resolved more easily, business and social transactions are less costly, personal coping is facilitated, information flows are better, and increased awareness promotes tolerance”.

DeLanda (2006, p. 56) observes that “when conversations (and other social encounters) are repeated with the same participants, or with overlapping sets of participants, longer-lasting social entities tend to emerge: interpersonal networks”. To enable this, one is required to allow time. Time is a significant factor in fostering social capital. The ABS (2004, pp. 111-117) notes numerous domestic and international surveys where the concept of ‘time’ was integral to the questioning of social capital. If people, or actors, are interacting more often community connectivity will increase, hence increased levels of social capital. Social networks “are accumulated or acquired *over time* and can be drawn upon and used in a way that produces personal, economic and social gain *over time*” (NESF, 2003, p. 33).<sup>16</sup> Importantly, in discussing the work of the OECD (2001b), the ABS (2004, p. 109) state:

A characteristic of all types of capital is that stocks depreciate over time and increase through investment and (in some cases) natural regeneration. For all of these resources, changes in flows take time to affect underlying stock. Another common feature of all types of capital is that they accumulate and are restored slowly, while they can be dissipated quickly if not used sustainably.

To continue, the ABS (2004, p. 67) state that “networks are patterns of relationships, and also patterns of the resources brought to the relationship by participants”. Arguably, it is within the networks that social capital exists. Bourdieu (1986, p. 249) defines social capital as “the aggregate of the actual or potential resources which are linked to possession of a durable network of more or less institutionalized relationships of mutual acquaintance and recognition”. Putnam (2000) asserts that

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<sup>16</sup> Emphasis by NESF (2003).

social capital assists communities to resolve collective problems, advance smoothly, develop or maintain community-beneficial traits and have a higher quality of life.

Social capital can embody an array of norms. A norm is “a ***socially embodied*** and ***individually perceived imperative*** that such-and-so an action must be performed in such-and-so a fashion” (Little, 2009).<sup>17</sup> The ABS (2004, p. 26) states:

[N]orms and values [e.g. trust, reciprocity, cooperation, and acceptance of diversity] are essential to healthy functioning of networks because they encourage people to act cooperatively, and effectively provide rules and sanctions to govern people's behaviour. More specifically, norms such as trust and reciprocity are important because they may help reduce transaction costs relating to negotiation and enforcement, and encourage the sharing of knowledge and ideas.

Social capital can enforce and reinforce norms and values. According to Jary and Jary (2000, cited in ABS, 2004, p. 101), “Applying sanctions is the means by which a moral code or social norm is enforced, either positively in the form of rewards or negatively by means of punishment”. In discussing the work of Coleman (1988), Yuen et al. (2005, p. 495) note that social capital “involves coordinated actions that reflect trust, norms and networks among group or community members”. However, while network closure can be a distinct advantage of social capital (Lin, 2001), it can also be a disadvantage. Bourdieu argues that profits of membership “of civic associations and social networks are not available to everybody” (Blackshaw and Long, 2005, p. 251). It is discussed in the social capital literatures that social capital can cut both ways – enforcing and sanctioning both positive and negative norms as well as including some and excluding others.

Atterton (2007, p. 231) argues that “increasing attention has been paid recently to the importance of such non-economic relations in influencing the pattern of economic networks that firms maintain and in explaining the success or otherwise of

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<sup>17</sup> Emphasis by Little (2009).



firms". These foci are becoming increasingly important as "social capital creates local economic prosperity" (Wilson, 1997, p. 745). Sabatini's (2008, p. 466) work supports this notion when he states that "the strand of literature [social capital] generally focuses on the role of networks and trust in economic growth" demonstrating that value is attached to this capital. In discussing the work of Portes (2000), Glover (2006, p. 360) affords an example of this suggesting that "social ties cultivated at a health club may lead to friendships (the source) whose by-products include stock tips, product referrals, access to borrowed items, and emotional support (the effects)". Advocating that social capital has value allows for the term social capital to be argued in the economic realm. Lin (2001, p. 3) defines the term *capital* as "an investment of resources with expected returns in the marketplace" so therefore social capital is a "capital captured through social relations" or more accurately defined as "*investment in social relations with expected returns in the marketplace*" (p. 19).<sup>18</sup>

An issue within social capital theory, particularly in translating it into the economics realm, is that "in order for something to qualify as capital, and therefore as a vehicle for investment, there should be some understanding of how it might be increased" (Schuller, 2007, p. 23). Woolcock (2001, p. 14-15) attempts to justify the status of social capital as a capital when stating:

To talk of social relations as "capital", for example, is not sociological heresy or a sell-out to economics: it simply reflects the reality that our social relationships are one of the ways in which we cope with uncertainty (returning to our family when we lose our job), extend our interests (using alumni networks to secure a good job), realize our aspirations, and achieve outcomes we could not attain on our own (organizing a parade).

In the same article he follows this up by suggesting, "while social capital scholarship per se is surely on the safest ground when it speaks to community development

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<sup>18</sup> Emphasis by Lin (2001).

issues, the spirit of social capital is also consistent with findings now emerging in studies of macroeconomic growth”. This concept is further explored by McOrmond and Babb (2005, p. 24) when they state that “although social capital is located within the wider community, it needs to be spent to have value, and contributes to the community both directly and indirectly”.

While there are scholars debating the structure and scope of social capital, according to Bjørnskov and Sønderskov (2013) social capital now has so many meanings to so many scholars that that it is almost meaningless. To add to this, there exists a large body of literature which critiques social capital. For example, there have been numerous critiques made of social capital from an array of perspectives on how it is conceptualised through to how it is operationalised (Haynes, 2009). The feminist perspective (for example: Mayoux, 2001, Rankin, 2002, Bruegel, 2005) explores the negative view taken by social capital theorists of the changing role of women in society and how existing social structures can be of disbenefit to women. The structural critique questions where social capital actually resides, what form it takes and how power works within it (for example: DeFilippis, 2001, Navarro, 2002, Durlauf and Fafchamps, 2004).

In the case of Putnam, the use of quantitative measures to draw broad findings of social structure has drawn methodological criticisms (for example: Durlauf and Fafchamps, 2004, Blackshaw and Long, 2005). As Blackshaw and Long (p. 246) state, the “‘like us/unlike us’ presumption that lies at the heart of the distinction between bonding and bridging is hard to appreciate given the multi-dimensionality of any individual (sex, age, class, occupation, ethnicity, sexual orientation, political belief, abilities, interests)”. They posit that Putnam’s methodology is undermined by a positivist approach that is “extremely limited by its lack of qualitative insights”. Associated with this critique is how social capital is measured (for example: Fine, 1999, Durlauf and Fafchamps, 2004, Fafchamps, 2006). The most colourful critique is arguably that of Fine (for example: 1999, 2002, 2003) who observes that social capital is a flawed, chaotic, incoherent, selective, peddled and benevolent concept

that is a degradation of scholarship and attempts to turn social scientists into economists.

Haynes (2009, p. 1) suggests that the “limitations [of social capital] as a unified concept have not been adequately tackled within the academic literature” and that “a stronger concept of social capital will emerge only by addressing these limitations explicitly and as a cluster rather than individually”. Haynes (2009) scopes eight criticisms of social capital from the literature on social capital that need to be addressed. The first criticism is the argument that social capital is not actually a ‘capital’. ‘Capital’ is argued to be “thing possessed by individuals” (Bowles, 1999, p. 6, cited in Haynes, 2009, p. 4) whereas social capital does not. The second criticism relates to social capital not actually being social as it “remains a fundamentally economic concept” (Haynes, 2009, p. 6). Social capital is a collection of themes and not a new theory or original (criticism three) while being a tautology (criticism four) where “untangling the causes, effects, correlations and conjunctions is a difficult undertaking when dealing with networks and complex interdependencies” (Haynes, 2009, p. 10). In relation to criticism four, criticism five suggests that causality is difficult to demonstrate in changes to communities and social capital. As discussed previously, a key issue with social capital is the ability to measure it with methodological issues unpinning this (criticism six) and it has an inherent ‘dark side’ (criticism seven). Finally, it is difficult to operationalise (criticism eight).

While these various critiques are noted, this thesis is not primarily focussed on a critique of social capital literature nor will it consider the debates which arise from the array of perspectives. This research accepts that the concept is contested.

This study does focus on useful questions and extensions to the discussion on social capital. First, on social capital theory as a lens to view contemporary society and, second, on whether traditional social capital concepts still exist and, if so, in what form/s. In order to do this, it is argued that rather than be caught up in these debates it is appropriate to examine how the concept is being adopted and utilised

in contemporary global contexts. This research acknowledges that social capital will vary between countries, however social capital theory and research of international authors is still relevant in an Australian context (for example: Stone, 2001).

### ***2.3.3 The Contemporary Social Context***

#### **Social Capital Decline?**

Warde et al. (2005, p. 405) state that “Putnam’s fear is that bridging capital is on the decline”. Putnam (1995) argues that traditional forms of civic participation such as PTAs, church groups and political parties are disintegrating. Given influences like the online social networking, is social capital really on the decline? Debate is circulating in the literature as to whether new forms of social capital are emerging where more individualised affiliations are occurring (NESF, 2003). For example, Schuller (2007) suggests that, due to the changing social landscape, people are now having fewer strong social ties and developing more weaker social ties. There are possibly new forms of social capital being developed.

Schuller (p. 17) goes on further to question:

Others have challenged this [Putnam’s position that social capital is on the decline], pointing to new forms of social capital which have sprouted. The general trend is for a decline in traditional organized vehicles of social capital, such as political parties or established churches, but a growth in looser, more individualized affiliations.

Similarly, Robinson and Godbey (2005) undertook a study of the University of Chicago’s General Social Survey (GSS) looking at data from 1974 to 2000. They identified that the data is “counter to the arguments in Putnam (2000) about declining social capital” (p. 274) given that the overall social interaction amongst respondents was on the increase. For example, ‘contact with neighbours’ and ‘attending bars’ were on the decline whereas there was no decline in ‘get-togethers with relatives’ and an increase in ‘seeing friends’. Interestingly for social capital

research, “these findings are consistent with the diary findings of relatively little decline in visiting and socialising” (p. 274). Indeed, even though Putnam (2000, p. 93) argues that social capital is on the decline, he does acknowledge that each informal encounter “is a tiny investment in social capital”. This is a theme worth pursuing.

While Bauman (2000, p. 37) suggests that “the prospects of individualized actors being ‘re-embedded’ in the republican body of citizenship are dim”, Glackin’s (2013, p. 2) ethnographic study on urban communities found that “individuals are using many of the traditional forms of community behaviour, in tandem with contemporary forms of sociality that allow for greater levels of reflexivity, to produce strong community structures”. Warde et al. (2005, p. 404) provide further evidence of this:

We can detect a move away from conceptions of social capital which privilege the significance of involvement in formal arenas, such as voluntary associations (see Anheier and Kendall, 2002; Field, 2003; Putnam, 2000) towards recognition of the way that informal social relations might generate trust and participation.

Despite his reservations Putnam (1995, p. 70) suggests that “perhaps the traditional forms of civic organization whose decay we have been tracing have been replaced by vibrant new organizations”. He calls these new forms *tertiary associations* which are mass-membership organisations. This perspective does give cause to wonder, for example, whether social media could be considered one of these tertiary associations in contemporary society. In his seminal work on the declining social capital in the United States of America, Putnam (1995) ascribes technological changes as one of the four factors in the decline in social capital. Is it possible that technology is transforming social capital rather than causing it to decline? Certainly, there is a rapidly increasing interest in the social networking sites and their role in contemporary social networking (Beer, 2008).

Putnam has recently stated that it is possible that social media may re-engage civic involvement (Sander and Putnam, 2010). In 2007, boyd<sup>19</sup> and Ellison (2007) stated that there had been exponential growth in social media sites taking place. This is still evident seven years on. During the 2000s there was a wave of research into online social networking. As observed by Beer (2008, p. 516), “there is a burgeoning academic interest in this [social networking sites] phenomenon”. Hampton (2003, p. 427) argues that “at the correct scale, local use of CMC [computer-mediated communication] has the potential to expand social networks, generate high levels of social capital, and reduce the cost and increase the speed of community involvement”. Lin (2001, p. xii) notes that a rapid increase in cybernetworks is counteracting the “pre-mature proclamation that social capital may declining or dying”. Phelan and Zlatevska (2013) suggest that social media has “also become a determining factor in measuring that often elusive concept known as ‘social capital’”.

Computer networking through people becomes social networking (Wellman 2001 in Kavanaugh et al., 2005). Instant messages and social networking sites constitute social media (Correa et al., 2010) with social media becoming integral in contemporary society (Chapman, 2009). According to Phillips (2008, cited in Redesign Public Relations, 2012), “We can see this evolution [the importance of the Internet for public relations] more clearly today from often-personal experience of chat, instant messaging, Usenet, blogs, MySpace, Facebook, and perhaps Second Life”. Tinsley (2012) argues that there will not be one social networking platform to “rule them all”. He argues that “while the public battle for ‘most liked’ social network carries on, trends point to a far more satisfying outcome: diversity of choice”. The role of social media will be ever-evolving as “users will embrace a variety of sites, each of which excels at its unique method of connecting, sharing and more” (Tinsley, 2012). The quote below from Chapman (2009) sums up the general thinking around the future of social media as a communications tool:

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<sup>19</sup> Author’s name spelt in all lower case.

The one thing we can be pretty sure of at this point is that social media is not just a phase, and likely won't go away any time soon ... at least until something better comes along.

Discussion on the role of social media in developing social networks is occurring on blogs, websites and news outlets. However, academic research is the rise. To find contemporary scholarly studies into the influence of social media one is required to look toward the computer-mediated technologies and new media literatures (for example: Pasek et al., 2009, Valenzuela et al., 2009, Burke et al., 2011, Ellison et al., 2011, Hampton et al., 2011, Gil de Zúñiga et al., 2012). The *Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication* in 2007 produced a special edition focussing on social networking sites and "their affordances and reach" to bring "together scholarship on these emergent phenomena" (boyd and Ellison, 2007, p. 210). Kavanaugh et al. (2005, p. 128) argue that "heavy Internet users with bridging ties have higher social engagement, use the Internet for social purposes, and have been attending more local meetings and events since going online than heavy Internet users with no bridging ties". Further, their research finds that the "Internet also facilitates and supports civic engagement" and that it "alleviates constraints of time by providing anytime/anywhere information distribution and exchange with a large number of people" (p. 129). Pollet et al. (2011, p. 253) conducted a study regarding "relationships between use of social media (instant messaging and social network sites), network size, and emotional closeness". In contrast to the findings of Kavanaugh et al. (2005, p. 128), Pollet et al. (2011, p. 253) discovered that online social networks did not necessarily transfer to the offline world even though "time spent using social media was associated with a larger number of online social network 'friends'".

Cuesta (2012), blogging for the World Bank, states:

As the numbers of users [of social media] increase, social media allows interpersonal relationships that otherwise might not have been initiated, resumed, or developed in its absence. Clearly, belonging to social media platforms is an increasingly popular and powerful form of inclusion, communication, and connection among individuals, regardless of distance and circumstances.

Although the power of social media to form connections is evident, Cuesta (2012) does make the claim that this power can also translate into exclusion. For example: “Argue with your friend and you may well be blocked from his or her social network - a socialized punishment larger than simply not answering your phone calls”. He further explains cases of users of social media that have led to deaths relating to cyberbullying and reactions to derogatory posts. These observations resonate with the research of Sabatini and Sarracino (2014) who found that trust decreases with online interactions on social networking sites. They suggest that this “may be interpreted as an individual reaction to diversity” (p. 40).

However, Sabatini and Sarracino’s (2014) research suggests that “the online networking revolution is allowing the Internet to support – rather than destroy – sociability and face-to-face interactions” (p. 40). The role of social media is an increasing field of academic research (Beer, 2008) that may provide further insight into the types of leisure contexts conducive to the formation of social capital.

### **Leisure Contexts and Social Capital**

To date, social capital theory has predominantly focussed on a horizontal, group-based format. As stated by Lin (2001, p. 23), “For Coleman and Bourdieu, dense or closed networks are seen as the means by which collective capital can be maintained and reproduction of the group can be achieved”. The question now is whether the *group* is the appropriate focus in contemporary society. It could be argued that a



hegemonic focus on dense groups may divert attention from the possibility and/or potential of new looser affiliations as they increase in the changing social and participatory environment of contemporary society. For example, in the youth studies arena, Bassani (2007) discusses a predominant focus on the positive but linear correlation of well-being and social capital. Bassani (2007, p. 31) suggests that a “more contextual approach to understanding social capital and its effects on youth well-being is needed” and that there is too much focus on the family unit. Bassani’s work makes two points: there are different kinds of affiliations which may be looser than the family unit and that context is important.

Schuller (2007, p. 24), in referring to the work of the NESF (2003), seems to back up this premise in that social capital “may be as much about creating appropriate contexts and environments as about direct support for networks”. Schuller’s statement suggests that the predominant focus on strong groups might become less of a focus than it was in the past and that researchers could step up efforts in understanding the contemporary and future contexts required for social capital. In addition, “cultivating places where people can spontaneously meet – are important for the creation and development of social capital” (NESF, 2003, p. 108).

Context is important in viewing social capital in contemporary society. Schuller (2007) argues that, to best understand what kinds of social capital are occurring and the interaction between them, there needs to be an understanding of the context. He calls for “more accounts of the trajectory of social capital growth” (p. 17). This trajectory is integral to assisting the leisure practitioner and policy maker to afford contemporary relevance to their work. Putnam (2000), for example, sees leisure as a place for social capital development and he “has continued to argue that leisure-based voluntary associations, far from being marginal or trivial, are in fact primary sites for the generation of social capital essential for social cohesion” (Glover and Hemingway, 2005, p. 393). Similar views are expressed by those who research leisure. According to Glover and Hemingway (2005, p. 397), “leisure provides opportunities for more unfettered social interaction, the creation of potentially

richer social ties in which social capital can be generated”. Although, in Putnam’s view (2000, p. 115), “we engage less often in leisure activities that encourage casual social interaction”. Is this true or have alternative forms of leisure come to the fore to provide casual social interaction? More broadly, are new kinds of contexts which foster casual social interaction becoming the “norm” in contemporary society?

The relationship between informal leisure contexts and social capital lies at the heart of this thesis. Glover et al. (2005, p. 470) ask “what is it about certain leisure contexts that facilitate bridging social capital?”. Van Ingen and Van Eijck (2009) wonder what civic activities are the most appropriate for fostering social capital and in what company. Rojek (2006, p. 38) states that “engaging together in leisure pursuits provides one means of transcending our ethnic, professional and ideological identities to build common social capital”. It is clear there is an emerging body (for example: Schuller, 2007) of work which has focussed on contemporary aspects of social capital around looser affiliations and associations and the role of contexts in forming and shaping these connections. It seems that leisure and the changed nature of it sits at the heart of these kinds of questions and may well provide the vehicle to explore the possible emergence of new forms of social capital.

Especially since the popularisation of the concept of social capital by Putnam, social capital theory has paid more attention to the group. Given the shift in leisure, identifying how people are bridges or bonds in informal leisure contexts is difficult in today’s socially-diverse society. Social capital is a fundamental product of social connectivity but, if society is becoming more individualised with looser affiliations as the earlier analysis of leisure and social capital reveals, then the continued focus on the group may be less relevant nowadays. Leisure does not need to be undertaken in strong-bonded groups and there is a shift toward less-structured forms of leisure.

This thesis argues it is timely to shift the research gaze to the strength of social ties between individuals as social actors to explore how these social bonds are formed. This research proposes that examining the creation and maintenance of bridges

between individuals rather than between groups is an approach to better understanding a more individualised world: in this thesis it is a *focus on individuals in informal leisure contexts acting out social interaction*. In this light, the early work on the strength of weak ties by Granovetter (1973, 1983) may be usefully applied to this context to provide further insight into the dynamic nature of contemporary social ties. This approach has been utilised in the online social networking realm (for example: Kavanaugh et al., 2005, Easley and Kleinberg, 2010) and indicates the usefulness of the SWT approach in better understanding contemporary society.

### **2.3.4 The Strength of Weak Ties**

Outside of the core or mainstream literature on social capital is a body of work developed by Granovetter known as *the strength of weak ties* (SWT) (Granovetter, 1973, 1983). This body of work is usefully articulated as follows: “In 1973 Granovetter suggested the dichotomy of strong ties and weak ties, the two generic forms of social relations” (Fliaster and Spiess, 2008, p. 101). Weak ties are those ties that are not strong bonding but are linked (or have an increased potential to be linked) to an individual nonetheless. Hauser et al. (2007, p. 77) summarise Granovetter’s weak ties theory:

[R]elationships between people can exhibit either frequent contacts and deep emotional involvement (close friends) or sporadic interactions with low emotional commitment (loose acquaintances). Networks with relationships of the first kind display strong ties, distant acquaintances form weak ties.

Social capital theory has not paid sufficient attention to ties between individuals because of its focus on the reproduction of the dense group. Granovetter (1973, p. 1360) communicates that “most network models deal, implicitly, with strong ties, thus confining their applicability to small, well-defined groups”. This is also a limitation of social capital theory. Fliaster and Speiss (2008, p. 114) explain:

## Chapter Two – Literature Review

[S]tudies of network ties have taken two paths. The first stream, which goes back to Granovetter (1973), emphasizes the “strength of weak ties”. The second, which dates back to Coleman (1988) and Krackhardt (1992), stresses close relationships and the “strength of strong ties”.

According to Law and Mooney (2006, pp. 135-136),

Not all version [sic] of social capital share Bourdieu and Coleman’s emphasis on the role of the ‘strong ties’ of dense social networks. Others return to Granovetter’s emphasis on the efficacy of loose, informal social coalitions, what is referred to as ‘the strength of weak ties’.

Hauser et al. (2007, p. 77) suggest that Granovetter’s SWT theory reveals useful insights into social capital: “social capital is a broad term that encompasses many attitudes and manifestations, but which foster the dissemination of information and ideas? The work of Granovetter provides valuable insight in this respect”. Granovetter’s weak ties theory is shaped by social communication in that “social systems lacking in weak ties will be fragmented and incoherent” (Granovetter, 1983, p. 202). This holds synergies with the role of Putnam’s (1995) bridges as “acquaintances, as compared to close friends, are more prone to move in different circles than oneself” (Granovetter, 1983, p. 205). Putnam (2000) makes a fleeting reference to SWT theory in likening bridging capital to weak ties. Putnam (2000, p. 23) describes Granovetter’s (1973) work as,

“[W]eak” ties that link me to distant acquaintances who move in different circles from mine are actually more valuable than the “strong” ties that link me to relatives and intimate friends whose sociological niche is very like my own.

Granovetter’s SWT research focuses on the individual through mapping the links, and the strength of them, between individuals. Fundamentally, this is a different conceptual approach to the bonding and bridging theory in that it is about the strength of ties between people, not necessarily bridges between strong-bonded

groups. However, the difference between what is a bridge and what is a weak tie is confusing. Granovetter (1983) uses the term 'bridge' and suggests that weak ties extend beyond intimate circles. The terms weak ties and bridges are often used interchangeably but fundamentally bridges focus on links between groups whereas the SWT theory, arguably, focuses on the strength of linkages between individuals in the social network whether or not they link groups.

In the SWT approach, acquaintances (weak ties) allow access to information and resources, exposure to different viewpoints and diffusion of culture (see Granovetter, 1983). Granovetter (1983, pp. 228-229) says that "something flows *through* these bridges and that whatever it is that flows actually plays an important role in the social life of individuals, groups and societies".<sup>20</sup> This premise is fundamental to SWT theory especially when it is argued that "weak ties are more instrumental than strong ties – providing informational resources rather than supporting and [sic] exchange of confidences" (Wellman 1992 in Kavanaugh et al., 2005, p. 120). To support this argument, "Information from networks between different people can circulate through weak ties. Removing a weak tie, therefore, could potentially cause far more damage to transmission of knowledge than elimination of a strong tie" (Hauser et al., 2007, p. 77). In an individualised world there exists a threat of elimination of weak ties, let alone strong ties.

Granovetter (1983, p. 218) argues that strong ties require more time to maintain and that "the stronger the tie between two people, the greater the extent of the overlap in their friendship circles". Importantly for this thesis, Granovetter (1973, p. 1361) proposes that the strength of an interpersonal tie is:

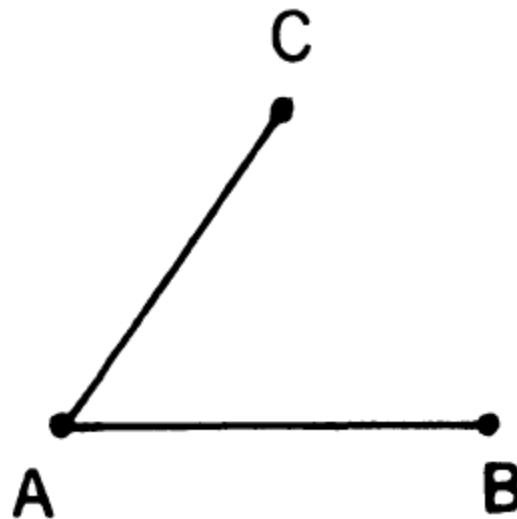
[A] (probably) linear combination of the amount of time, emotional intensity, the intimacy (mutual confiding), and the reciprocal services which characterize the tie.

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<sup>20</sup> Emphasis by Granovetter (1983).

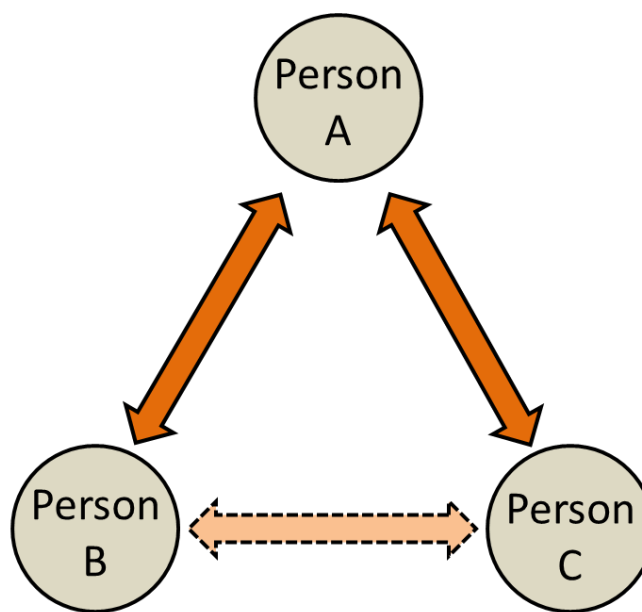
Boorman (1975) suggests that “rational economic actors might choose to allocate their time and energy to weak ties as compared to strong ones” (Granovetter, 1983, p. 211). Boorman “assumes that strong ties require more time to maintain than weak ones” (Granovetter, 1983, p. 211-212) emphasising the importance of time in strengthening ties.

In Figure 3, Granovetter (1973) offers a simplistic example of the SWT theory. This example relates to persons A and B having a relationship (or interpersonal tie) and persons A and C having a relationship (or interpersonal tie) but there is no tie between persons B and C. This triad is the most unlikely triad (or network of three people) to occur when the bonds between persons A and B and persons B and C are strong bonds. In exploring his version of social capital, Coleman (1988) offers a similar diagram to this (see Figure 2). He theorises that network closure is required for the effective norm development and sanctioning as well as the building of trust. However, Coleman’s drawing shows strong bonds between all three persons to enable closure.



**Figure 3 – Granovetter’s Forbidden Triad**  
(Granovetter, 1973, p. 1363)

Figure 4 creates a visual representation of a more likely version of what Granovetter's simplistic triad would look like when the A-B and A-C bonds are strong. The link between persons B and C is drawn as a weak tie. This diagram demonstrates triadic closure (Easley and Kleinberg, 2010) for Coleman (1988) but with not all ties being of similar strength, or even strong. Coleman's model argues that the network is either closed or it is not. Granovetter's representation of a network shows that closure can occur without bonding.



**Figure 4 – A More Likely Triad**  
(Adapted from Granovetter, 1973, p. 1363)<sup>21</sup>

Therefore, the likeliness of persons B and C having a relationship is determined upon the strength of the other A-B and A-C relationships. The strength of the tie between B and C can be dependent on the strength of the ties between persons A and B and persons A and C. The likeliness of B meeting C and creating an interpersonal tie is increased if the ties between persons A and B and between A and C are stronger ties. If persons B and C do not have a relationship, or one without any substance of

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<sup>21</sup> This diagram is an adaptation of Granovetter's Forbidden Triad model.

significance, then, according to Granovetter (1973), there is an absent tie<sup>22</sup> between B and C. The tie between persons B and C described above may still be an absent tie depending on time, intensity, intimacy and reciprocal services invested in the A-B and A-C relationships. It is not inconsistent, though, for person B to not know person C or for person B and person C to be interacting without A knowing (Granovetter, 1983). In effect, both person B and person C could be described as a ‘friend of a friend’ with the friend being person A.

Fundamentally, underpinning the SWT theory is that “the stronger the ties connecting two individuals, the more similar they are, in various ways” (Granovetter, 1973, p. 1362) and that these people can bring others into the network on varying levels depending on the strength of their other ties. Importantly, not all weak ties bridge but all bridges are weak ties (Granovetter, 1973). This is a point of difference for social capital theory. Whether a weak tie creates a bridge or not depends on its strength. Granovetter’s theory is based on social connections between individuals but takes into account the strength of these ties to facilitate value (or the outcomes). It may be enough to have a hundred social ties but if they have little or no substance then they are of limited or no benefit. The focus on an individual’s social connections but exploring the strength of them (and subsequently their outcomes) could add insight in the contemporary dynamic of social capital creation.

### ***2.3.5 Relevance of Weak Ties in Contemporary Society***

Key issues raised in this thesis thus far centre around increased individualisation of activities. In this light, Granovetter’s theory is an appropriate lens to use to explore the nature of social capital in increasingly individualised lives. An understanding of and focus on weak ties provides a framework to better understand the nature of transactions within and the robustness of social capital in the contemporary social landscape.

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<sup>22</sup> Absent ties include ties without substance and/or the lack of any relationship (Granovetter 1973).



In earlier sections of this chapter it has been shown that leisure is a context for building social capital and that third places are spaces of leisure that build social ties. Similarly to the views of Glover et al. (2005), Van Ingen and Van Eijck (2009) and the NESF (2003, cited in Schuller, 2007) in relation to the contexts for social capital, Granovetter (1983, p. 229) in earlier work had already identified that “for a community to have many weak ties which bridge, there must be several distinct ways or contexts in which people may form them”. Contexts are important for the creation, maintenance and transaction of social ties into the future. Weak ties are time and context dependent (Wu, 2012).

This thesis draws all these elements together to configure a framework to examine how contemporary social capital is being generated through the strength of weak ties in social contexts which accommodate an individualised and changing society. The study argues that the changing roles and structures of leisure provide a contemporary vehicle within which to explore these ideas. The framework takes an individual social tie approach rather than dominant focus on the group. To do this there needs to be new light shed on the interaction and potential alignment of leisure, place (especially third place), social capital and SWT theory. This assists to better understand social capital in the twenty-first century. The research framework is explained further below.

### **2.4 Informal Leisure Contexts and Social Ties: A Research Framework**

#### ***2.4.1 The Value of an Interdisciplinary Approach***

Alexander (2008, p. 19) suggests that “disciplines too often talk past one another”. A review of the concepts of social capital, leisure and third place suggests that the distances between these literatures seems to be narrowing and more scholars are calling for rapprochement. When coupled with renewed interest in Granovetter’s SWT concepts new opportunities emerge for theory to understand how social ties are formed in the contemporary environment.

Glover et al. (2005, p. 461) present an argument for a focus on leisure and social capital asking “what role does leisure play, if any, in facilitating the mobilization of resources?” Soukup (2006, p. 430) suggests that the concept of social capital may “develop Oldenburg’s analysis further” and Parker (2008, p. 11) argues that place as a concept is interdisciplinary and can be more fully utilised. Further, Glover (2006) observes there has been an overwhelming focus on macro-level studies into social capital and suggests that leisure researchers could shift to a more micro-level “to examine more effectively the actual distribution of social capital within and between leisure networks by examining the extent to which *individuals* can actually *appropriate* social capital” (p. 361). This picks up Granovetter’s (1973, p. 1360) suggestion that “analysis of processes in interpersonal networks provides the most fruitful micro-macro bridge”.

Despite the potential for more informal forms of leisure as a vehicle to build new forms of social capital, leisure and social capital research fields, in the main, do not have a common discourse. However, this is changing. For example, at the 10<sup>th</sup> *World Leisure Congress* held in Quebec City, Canada, in 2008 (see World Leisure Organization, 2008), delegates from over seventy countries adopted the *Quebec Declaration* where it was agreed:

Leisure plays an essential role in community development: it affects the quality of life and the well-being of individuals, contributes to the development of social ties and social capital, and represents a place for expression and engagement in democratic life.

This declaration represents a significant shift from the 1998 *Sao Paulo Declaration* adopted at the 5<sup>th</sup> *World Leisure Congress* (World Leisure and Recreation Association, 1998) where there was no specific mention of the term ‘social capital’.

Further, both the social capital and leisure literatures retain complexities relating to the definitions of their terms making the discourse hard to navigate. Interestingly, the literature explicitly linking leisure with social capital appears to be found in the leisure research field with researchers such as Hemingway (for example: 1996, 1999) playing a lead role in bridging this gap. There is an apparent use of social capital to explain leisure outcomes and vice versa but it was not until around 2005 that scholars explicitly called for an examination on the intersection of social capital and leisure (for example: Blackshaw and Long, 2005, Glover and Hemingway, 2005, Glover, 2006).

What is relevant is that leisure research continues to grapple with social change (Mair and Reid, 2007). This is a focus which brings it into proximity with issues surrounding social capital and social networks. Glover and Hemingway (2005, p. 387) observe that “leisure researchers have gradually, yet increasingly, focussed on the connection between social capital and leisure” arguing that “social capital remains surprisingly under-examined in leisure studies” (p. 388). Hemingway’s (1999) early work was ground breaking. Most studies on leisure and social capital are more recent. Glover and Hemingway’s (2005) article *Locating Leisure in the Social Capital Literature* and Blackshaw and Long’s (2005) paper entitled *What’s the Big Idea? A Critical Exploration of the Concept of Social Capital and its Incorporation into Leisure Policy Discourse* provoke discussion on the possible connections. “Social capital has recently become prominent on the agendas of leisure researchers”, as Van Ingen and Van Eijck (2009, p. 192) observe.

In 2005 Glover and Hemingway edited a special issue of the *Journal of Leisure Research* (Vol. 37 No. 4 pp. 387-518) focussed on demonstrating “the central role leisure plays in generating social capital while stimulating other leisure researchers to examine social capital”. The authors made a deliberate effort toward narrowing the discourse gap between social capital and leisure with their lead article. Since the publication of these articles there has been an increase in publications in the leisure literatures deliberately focussed on the effects of leisure on social capital (for

example: Glover, 2006, Hemingway, 2006, Misener and Mason, 2006, Van Ingen and Van Eijck, 2009).

An examination of this literature shows that the framing of leisure is predominantly around strong-bonded groups. Nevertheless, there is evidence that the social capital and informal leisure connection is important. This is because “many leisure activities do not fall within ... (Putnam’s 1993) description of social capital” (Van Ingen and Van Eijck, 2009, p. 192). Van Ingen and Van Eijck (2009, p. 193) found through time budget studies, “informal sociability is more important in people’s everyday lives than formal participation (Van Ingen, 2008), [but] the former is studied less often”.

The central tenet to this thesis is that it is the intersection of these bodies of theory that could yield useful insights on social capital because “leisure that is social in nature may encourage interactions among people and may contribute to the generation of social capital and community” (Yuen et al., 2005, p. 494). Underpinning this is the role that spaces and places might play.

### **2.4.2 Configuring the Framework**

Given, as proposed earlier, that a context may be more important in today’s social environment and that a focus on strong-bonded networks can be a stumbling block, the leveraging of informal leisure contexts to strengthen the ties might be a contemporary solution to engaging communities. Rather than a focus on investment into organised community-based groups, there is a need to build social capital by people ‘bumping into each other’ more often in social leisure settings to facilitate and foster *place-based friends*. Can this resolve issues raised by scholars and policy makers (for example: NESF, 2003, Glover et al., 2005, Van Ingen and Van Eijck, 2009) in their search for contexts more reflective of contemporary social capital?

What is required is an exploration of the interaction between contemporary social ties, place factors and the less-structured forms of leisure to gain an understanding on how social capital is being built or could be built in contemporary society. This

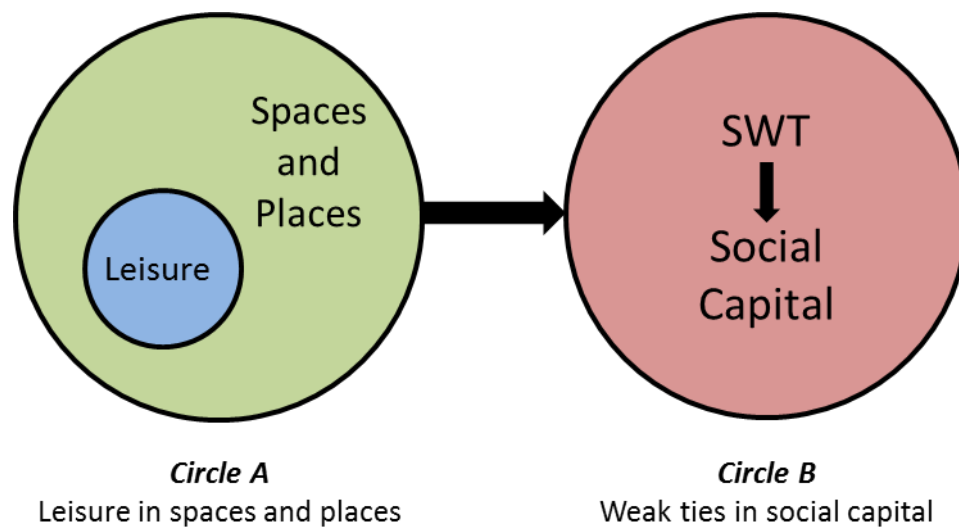
thesis explores ways of strengthening the weak ties that Granovetter (2005, p. 34) would describe as being “of little significance” and to identify if there are actually new forms of weak ties in informal leisure contexts that could be made stronger.

Sharpe and Lashua (2008, p. 246) state that “popular leisure pursuits form powerful conduits to key issues of culture, society and questions of contemporary knowledge”. This thesis argues that informal, or less-structured, leisure activities will become increasingly significant when compared to formal, or structured, leisure activities for the generation of social ties and the formation of social capital. As communities become ‘looser’, the use of informal leisure contexts to foster weak ties will be more significant for community resilience.

To this end, the thesis aims to provide a better understanding of the weak ties created and strengthened through space and place-based, informal leisure. Already new terms and concepts are being framed in an attempt to better understand the links between leisure, place and social ties. Terms like ‘leisurescapes’ (Fullagar et al., 2013) and ‘place capital’ (Kent, 2013) are examples. It is timely and expedient not only to unpack the origins and application of these terms but also to provide a research framework within which to better understand the processes underpinning them.

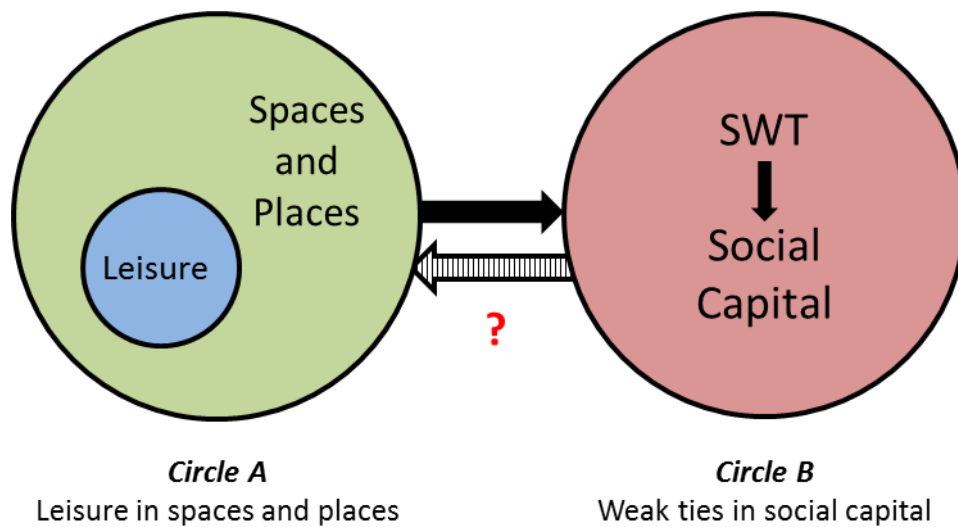
The aim of the research is not to challenge theories but to configure them to guide an exploration of what occurs ‘on the ground’ in an informal leisure context. No one body of literature will assist on its own. Figure 5 outlines the research framework. While the diagram is simplistic, it is designed to broadly visualise the framework. Circle A is a reproduction of Figure 1 that identifies that leisure happens in spaces and places. This circle provides a construct to elucidate how informal leisure contexts might assist to better understand social capital in contemporary society. This construct feeds into social capital theory in Circle B via the large black arrow. Within Circle B sits SWT theory. It does so to seek how it can assist to better understand social capital. By configuring a framework this thesis not only

investigates the spatial elements of social capital but explores how it is created through informal leisure, what place characteristics can shape it and how the strength of weak ties might inform social capital in a more individual-focussed society.



**Figure 5 – Research Framework**

However, how does this framework assist the leisure practitioner and policy maker? Figure 6 introduces an extra arrow pointing back to Circle A. Once the elements of Circle A are tested through Circle B then Circle B can feed insight back to Circle A where the practitioner and the policy maker operate. Figure 6 assists to inform policy and practice.



**Figure 6 – Research Framework with Insights for the Practitioner**

According to the World Leisure Organization (2008), “The term ‘leisure’ is characterised as perceived freedom, experienced through a variety of social, cultural, sport and tourism activities in which the individual is the main actor”. The focus on the actor, or individual, is integral to this thesis. The focus on the individual aligns the research framework with the concept of weak ties (see Granovetter, 1973, 1983) and third place (see Oldenburg, 1999) while incorporating Coleman’s (1988) actor concept. This thesis stretches bridging capital theory by using the concept of weak ties and argues this will be a key to the future of social capital because of the shift toward individuals interacting in ‘looser’ ways.

Fundamentally, for this thesis the underpinnings of the framework are:

1. Leisure is an important factor in people’s lives but it means different things to different people;
2. Participation in leisure is changing;
3. Spaces and places play an important role in leisure facilitation;

4. A better understanding of how social ties are formed through informal leisure will build understanding of how contemporary social capital may be formed; and
5. A better understanding of how contemporary social capital may be formed may assist policy makers and practitioners to make more informed decisions.

## 2.5 Research Question

The framework outlined in Figure 5 provides the research framework within which this thesis is located. This research tests the linkages between the components of the framework with the aim to identify how social capital can be researched and observed in informal leisure. It explores how informal leisure contexts might influence social capital.

In order to do this, the question proposed in this research is:

*Do informal leisure contexts build contemporary social networks and, subsequently, social capital?*

To answer this question, a series of sub-questions are asked:

1. *Are weak ties present in informal leisure contexts and, if so, what role do they play in generating social capital, and how?*
2. *What are the characteristics of these contexts that can assist to build social capital?*
3. *How do informal leisure contexts support and/or expand the ideas proposed by Granovetter and researchers of social capital?*



## Chapter Two – Literature Review

The methodology designed to respond to these questions requires careful consideration of the most appropriate ways to identify and document weak ties. Similarly, it is important to determine appropriate examples of informal leisure contexts to study this. These matters are elaborated carefully in the following chapter on methodology.

# **Informal Leisure as a Source of Social Capital Formation: *A Festival Case Study***

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## **3. Methodology**

### 3.1 Introduction

This thesis is a study of informal leisure, both spatially and in activity, and how through the strength of weak ties it can build social capital. Informal leisure contexts are selected as an appropriate scope for this research because they reflect changes in contemporary society. To do this the study has taken an interdisciplinary approach drawing on several bodies of literature and discipline areas. An in depth literature review of the bodies of knowledge of leisure, social capital, SWT and third place collectively afford an interdisciplinary research framework. Within this framework the research asks: *Do informal leisure contexts build contemporary social networks and, subsequently, social capital?*

This research studies weak ties within a contemporary context, specifically a music festival – the Falls – as an appropriate context to determine if weak ties are assets to be seriously considered as a ‘capital’ for contemporary social capital. This is a particular type of informal leisure context that is on the increase globally (see Gibson and Connell, 2012) making it a relevant, contemporary case to examine. Also, its temporary nature provides for further contextual insight. The literature suggests that leisure can be a mechanism to build social capital. Therefore, this research focusses on exploring the productive side of social capital<sup>23</sup> to seek insight into how social capital is fostered and the associated benefits for individuals and the broader society. The selection of a festival as the appropriate context and case study is examined in this chapter. A key reason for this case study is not only because of the emergence of festivals in contemporary society but also because there is a demonstrated need to study the socio-cultural dimensions of festivals and the value and benefits they generate (for example: Mair and Whitford, 2013). As observed by Thrane (2002, cited in Pegg and Patterson, 2010, p. 86), “much of the research in the

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<sup>23</sup> While Glover and Hemingway (2005, p. 398) suggest that the leisure field awaits research into the ‘dark side’ of social capital, this is not a deliberate focus of this thesis. The research focus in this thesis is to identify indicators of social capital through the use of tools and frameworks based on the work of the various scholars and institutions noted in chapters two and three. This research is to explore whether informal leisure contexts can facilitate productive social capital.

area of festival management has focused mainly on economic impacts”. This thesis looks beyond this. This chapter explains the methodological approach to this research, the data collection and analysis methods and the participant profile.

### **3.2 Constructing Knowledge through Mixed Methods**

Flyvbjerg (2006, p. 222) argues that “context-dependent knowledge and experience are at the very heart of expert activity”. Given the thesis spotlight on informal leisure contexts, this research is focussed on gaining context-dependent knowledge and experience to provide insight for the practitioner’s dilemma. Walter (2006a, p. 5) states that “social research is about investigating the social questions we and others have about our social world”. Walter goes on to say that the key word here is ‘investigation’. Drawing on both Flyvbjerg and Walter, the methodological approach taken in this research closely examines a context through which to construct new knowledge.

Blackshaw and Long (2005) argue that Putnam’s (2000) methodological approach to his work on social capital is undermined by a positivist approach that is “extremely limited by its lack of qualitative insights” (p. 246). This suggests a defining of community based on quantitative data which does not reflect the full story. To address this issue, the methodology for this study is designed to explore the interactions in informal leisure contexts: at the intersection between social capital, leisure and place.

To be able to respond to the research questions and to acknowledge the concern of Putnam’s positivist approach lacking qualitative insights, this study sits within the constructivist-interpretive paradigm utilising a mixed method, case study approach. Constructivist-interpretive approaches view the world as having multiple realities and consider knowledge as co-created (see Schwandt, 2000, Denzin and Lincoln, 2011). This paradigm is arguably a narrative mode of thought that is in contrast to

the positivist mode where its “language is regulated by requirements of consistency and noncontradiction” (Shkedi, 2005, p. 9).

In discussing the work of Bruner (1985), Shkedi (2005, p. 9) says that constructivist thought seeks “explications that are context-sensitive and particular” whereas positivist approaches seek those that are context-free and universal. Importantly for this thesis, “constructivist ontology emphasizes the importance of context in understanding the phenomenon” (Shkedi, 2005, p. 3). A context-focussed, methodological underpinning is integral to this thesis as it aligns with the contextual focus of the research framework.

To explore stakeholder perspectives within a context, this study employs an interactive, mixed approach (Creswell and Plano Clark, 2011). Over the last decade the number of journals focussing on mixed methods research has grown (Fraser, 2014) as has the utilisation of a mixed method research approach by academics and researchers (Miller and Cameron, 2011). Mixed methods research is increasingly considered the third major research approach alongside quantitative and qualitative research (Johnson et al., 2007).

Cresswell et al. (2011, p. 4) describe mixed methods research as:

*“a research approach or methodology:*

- *focusing on research questions that call for real-life contextual understandings, multi-level perspectives, and cultural influences;*
- *employing rigorous quantitative research assessing magnitude and frequency of constructs and rigorous qualitative research exploring the meaning and understanding of constructs;*
- *utilizing multiple methods (e.g., intervention trials and in-depth interviews);*
- *intentionally integrating or combining these methods to draw on the strengths of each; and*

- *framing the investigation within philosophical and theoretical positions.”*

A mixed method approach allows for the perspectives and points of view of the participants to be understood in the broader social context (see Travers, 2010). It enables rich contextual descriptions that aligns with the interpretive approach (Denzin and Lincoln, 2003) whilst also allowing for quantitative descriptions by a large number of study participants (Walter, 2010b). Quantitative research allows for “the collection, analysis and development of understanding and interpretations of data on social phenomena from large groups or large data sources” (Walter, 2010b) while qualitative approaches allow for the point of view of the individual to be understood and therefore add depth and detail to the data collected (Denzin and Lincoln, 2003, Shkedi, 2005). These approaches allow for insights into the meaning behind experiences (see Travers, 2010) and how reality is socially constructed (Denzin and Lincoln, 2003). Although surveys are utilised in this research for base information they included qualitative questioning and are complemented by face-to-face focus groups and interviews. The methods are integrated, as suggested by Bryman (2007). In the research of Creswell (2003, p. 15) respondents “felt that biases inherent in any single method could neutralize or cancel the biases of other methods”. Importantly for this thesis, “[b]y mixing the datasets, the researcher provides a better understanding of the problem than if either dataset had been used alone” (Creswell, 2007, p. 7).

A range of studies (especially those on third places) cast light on informal leisure contexts. Useful examples are studies into the on-line environment (for example: Baker-Eveleth et al., 2005, Soukup, 2006, Moore et al., 2009, Foster, 2013), attendance at cultural and sporting venues (for example: Jacke, 2009, Mair, 2009, Slater and Koo, 2010), community markets (for example: Tiemann, 2008), health intervention (for example: Glover and Parry, 2009) and housing estates (for example: Williams and Pocock, 2009). These studies have utilised case study methods. Others

have taken a predominantly ethnographic-based, case study approach where social capital can be studied *in situ* via ethnographic means (Svendsen, 2006).

### 3.3 Utilising Case Studies

#### 3.3.1 Case Studies

Veal (2011) argues that utilising a case study approach enables multiple methods and triangulation. Others also support the approach of multiple methods in case studies arguing it facilitates in-depth and often more complete stories (for example: Stake, 2005, Jones, 2006, Ruddell, 2011). Using different methods can assist to triangulate findings as it mixes data and/or methods to gain insight into a topic through a wide range of viewpoints (Olsen, 2004). Jones (2006, p. 315) argues that the “aim of case studies is to focus on relationships and processes in a natural setting to discover interconnections and interrelationships, and how the various parts are linked”.

This thesis affords insight into the concept of social capital – the value derived from social networks (for example: Putnam, 2000). When this value is combined with the arguments that places are constructed through social means (Stokowski, 2002), that the primary activity of third places is conversation (Oldenburg, 1991 in Kivisto 2011) and that leisure may be a fertile arena to harness social networks (for example: Glover and Hemingway, 2005), a case study approach assists to tease out the relationships in its natural field setting. A natural field setting “can be conducive to casual but purposeful inquiries” (Fontana and Frey, 2005, p. 704) and as participants reveal their stories more can be learnt about the phenomenon (for example: Stake, 2005, Ruddell, 2011).

This argument is well summarised by Veal (2011, p. 128) who states that a “case study involves the study of an individual example – a case – of the phenomenon being researched. The aim is to seek to understand the phenomenon by studying

one or more single examples.” Stake (2005, p. 445) uses the term “instrumental case study” to describe a case study that will assist to understand a phenomenon not because of the case itself but because it “facilitates our understanding of something else”. Similarly, the case study is used in this thesis to construct an holistic understanding of a context. When discussing the uniqueness of some cases, Stake (2005, p. 451) proposes that “on representational grounds, the epistemological opportunity seems small, we [the case study researcher] are optimistic that we can learn some important things from any case”.

### ***3.3.2 Atypical Case Studies***

Flyvbjerg (2006, p. 220) argues that “it is not true that a [single] case study ‘cannot provide reliable information about the broader class’” as is put forward by Abercrombie et al. (2004). To the contrary, Stake (2005, p. 451) explains that “potential for learning is a different and sometimes superior criterion to representativeness”. He extends this argument by stating that “sometimes it’s better to learn a lot from an atypical case than a little from a seemingly typical case” and that this “may mean taking the most accessible one and the one that we can spend the most time with”. An “outlier case tends to yield more information than average cases” (National Center for Technology Innovation, 2011).

The Falls can be seen as an atypical case study. The Falls is chosen as the individual case to explore the changing nature of social capital and informal leisure in a setting. As an outlier case, or an atypical case (for example: Veal, 2011, Jones, 2006), the Falls is identified as a setting that could provide insight into contemporary informal leisure contexts and how they are shaped. The Falls is an example of an atypical case study that could provide a “stark contrast with what is the norm” due to its “crucial elements that are particularly significant” (Jones, 2006, p. 316). Arksey and Knight (1999, p. 57) would describe events like the Falls as “exceptions to the rule”. Thus while the Falls may not be an outlier in the context of music festivals it is an outlier when compared to day-to-day life in Tasmania.



A number of informal leisure case study options were considered for this research including skate parks, social media, al fresco dining, food festivals and waterfront developments. However, the case study selected was considered appropriate because of the re-emergence of festivals in Australian culture (for example: Gibson and Stewart, 2009, Gibson and Connell, 2012). Examining festivals through case studies is a commonly used approach (for example: Thrane, 2002, Gibson and Davidson, 2004, Cummings, 2005, McGregor and Gibson, 2009, Pegg and Patterson, 2010, Lashua, 2011, Tindall, 2011, Stadler et al., 2013). The Falls permits an interesting case to examine temporary contexts for leisure and the role that place may play. In this instance the researcher's links within the music industry (through board memberships and participation in the music industry in Tasmania) facilitates smooth entry into and negotiation of the Falls and its 'inhabitants'. The Falls as a case study is both practical and a readily accessible resource (Stake, 2005, Walter, 2006b).

The Falls also affords accessibility to a large catchment of participants within a confined space and in an informal setting. According to Hauser et al. (2007, p. 76), "Physical proximity is the necessary prerequisite for continuous and meaningful social interaction". As discussed, social capital has a spatial dimension (Rutten et al., 2010). Rutten et al. (2010p. 869) argue that "a dense network of social relations is easier to maintain as close proximity than at a distance". Spatial proximity becomes even more crucial for weak ties in that "it enables the frequent social interaction that is required to sustain them" (p. 869). The Falls is an example of how physical proximity, especially as a temporary space, may be leveraged to encourage social interaction. This is especially the case in the camping areas, otherwise known as 'tent city'.

The Falls, as a case, is studied in two distinct periods: during each of the 2010 and 2011 events. Attending twice enables an exploration in 2010 and a more targeted approach in 2011 to tease out and 'test' findings from 2010. Two methods were used for the 2010 data collection: an esurvey and focus groups. A face-to-face

written survey and targeted interviews that enabled the researcher to probe more deeply were used in 2011. An array of photographs were taken; however no photos taken by the research that may identify specific attendees are included in this thesis.

This study is not designed to advocate for or against the benefits of the Falls as an entity. Rather, the Falls is interrogated to better understand if and how social ties are formed and to examine if there is accumulation and extraction of social capital. The Falls is used instrumentally as an outlier case (for example: Veal, 2011, Jones, 2006) to tease out the aspects of social networking in a contemporary, informal leisure context.

The process of constructing knowledge in the research is a staged approach. Phase one - the first visit to the Falls in 2010 – is designed to test the interaction between the social capital and leisure components of the framework. There is a particular focus on gaining a better understanding of how people establish and/or maintain social ties at the Falls. However, it was anticipated that place characteristics may also be revealed because properties of place are often transmitted socially (for example: Memmott and Long, 2002) and the primary activity of third places is conversation (Oldenburg, 1991 in Kivisto 2011). Although the place component is not specifically a focus of phase one, it came through strongly in the data and became an integral focus in phase two (the return to the Falls in 2011). The methods to undertake this staged approach are outlined in the next section.

### **3.4 Methods of Data Collection**

Five key methods for collecting data and information gathering were undertaken as part of this research. The first is desktop analysis. Phase one utilises focus groups (n=17) at the Falls in 2010 and an esurvey (n=381) post-event. In phase two (2011), a face-to-face survey (n=556) and in-depth interviews (n=13) were conducted to deepen some of the findings from phase one. In addition, a form of participant

observation (see Veal, 2011) was also informally undertaken through a small number of brief audio-logs by the researcher to confirm details of interviews and photographs. Participant observation was also conducted within the focus groups to assist with directing the flow of the interviews. Participant observation has been found to be a highly appropriate method to study human behaviour at festivals (Mackellar, 2013). A combination of both quantitative and qualitative methods assists to capture a wide variety of responses and allows the researcher to triangulate methods and findings to not only build an understanding of the data but also give rigour. The esurvey in 2010 provides complementary questioning to the qualitative focus group discussions at the same event. In 2011 the lead method was the survey supplemented by the interviews that both contain complementary questions to assist with triangulation of results.

In phase one, the focus group discussions were conducted as the first method of data collection. This method was utilised to gain initial insights into participants' experiences and the social dynamics of the Falls while providing a deeper narrative to the questions to be asked on the esurvey. The esurvey was, subsequently, conducted post-attendance to seek reflections back on the experiences of the participants over the whole duration of the festival as well as affording complementary questions on how their experiences translated into their day to day lives. The combination of these two methods facilitated an initial picture of the opinions and reflections of attendees at the Falls. This initial picture highlighted gaps and opportunities for further investigation.

The second phase of data collection was shaped both by a need to confirm some of the insight gained from phase one (for example: how social ties are formed, the role of social media and the types of friendships formed) as well as seek data that may assist to bridge the information gaps (for example: spatial factors and the sense of community). Both of these methods (interviews and survey) were conducted simultaneously at the Falls as the interviews were obtained from people in the process of completing surveys.

The sections below provide a description of the methods utilised and justification as to why they were pertinent.

### ***3.4.1 Desktop Analysis***

The literature review (chapter two) illustrates that the social capital and leisure literatures, as yet, do not have a common discourse. This is also the case for informal leisure and Granovetter's (see 1973, 1983) theory on the strength of weak ties in social networks. The literature review revealed limited research into the value of weak ties, especially in the leisure field. There is also limited discourse between the leisure and social capital research literatures and ongoing debate as to the role of third places in social interaction (for example: Soukup, 2006, Slater and Koo, 2010). Desktop methods were also employed to inform the methodology.

### ***3.4.2 Quantitative and Qualitative Data: Survey Questionnaires***

For decision-making, Veal (2011) argues that people in policy and management roles such as government staffers and sport managers look for quantifiable data so that they can know the answers to how many of X did/do/are Y. Survey questionnaires are an approach to data collection that are characterised by being structured, often into categories, to obtain data on variables and/or characteristics (for example: Sarantakos, 2005, de Vaus, 2002, Sirakaya-Turk and Uysal, 2011, Veal, 2011, Walter, 2010c). A "key feature of questionnaire-based surveys is that they depend on respondents' own accounts of their behaviour, attitudes and intentions" (Veal, 2011, p. 127). Kavanaugh et al. (2005, p. 122) argue similarly to Veal (2011) in that "survey instruments are useful mechanisms for capturing quantitative data in the form of self-reported traits, attitudes, beliefs and behaviours". These "surveys are probably the most commonly used method in leisure and tourism research" (Veal, 2011, p. 127). They carry the advantage that they can be utilised in a manner to seek answers to both structured quantitative and open-ended qualitative questions and can be used to "return to the subjects for additional information" to build the picture

(Veal, 2011, p. 127). This ability to return to build the data assisted the two-visit case study approach of this research. The surveys were predominantly quantitative in nature but afforded questions that elicited qualitative responses (see Appendices 1 and 2).

The Internet has affected how social research is conducted (Sarantakos, 2005). The Internet has made it easier to disseminate survey instruments through the use of email and web-platforms (de Vaus, 2002, Singleton Jr. and Straits, 2002, Sarantakos, 2005, Walter, 2010c, Veal, 2011). When undertaking the process of Internet sampling, a researcher can access email databases to distribute esurveys or links to URLs into which the esurvey can be found. Tools such as SurveyMonkey, Zoomerang and CreateSurvey assist to design quick online surveys. SurveyMonkey is a web-based survey construction tool that “has a single purpose: to enable anyone to create professional online surveys quickly and easily” (SurveyMonkey, 2011). It enables the survey designer and the end-user to utilise a web-based platform without requiring the installation of software onto a computer.

According to Fontana and Frey (2003), Schaefer and Dillman (1998) found that better quality data and more detailed answers to qualitative questions can be received from email surveys compared to mail surveys. Veal (2011) argues that mail surveys, although still popular, have costs and slow response rates and transmission that are drawbacks to this method.

### **2010 Esurvey Questionnaire**

The 2010 Falls esurvey was conducted, as Veal (2011) would describe, as a fully electronic survey. The questionnaire was conducted fully online. The esurvey was entitled *Social & Leisure Survey on the Falls Music & Arts Festival 2010* (see Appendix 1). It was designed take approximately ten minutes to complete. Participants were asked questions in four sections in areas such as motivations for attendance at the Falls, forms of communication, wellbeing status, social participation in society and

social networking prior to, during and following the Falls. The esurvey also captured basic demographic information such as gender, age, income level and educational achievement as they can be utilised as variables to assess social capital (e.g. socio-economic status) (see ABS, 2004).

Only people who attended the 2010 Festival and those aged eighteen or over were permitted to complete the survey, primarily due to difficulties in obtaining parental consent. Participants could only be identified by their email address of which participants supplied voluntarily for a prize draw of two tickets to the 2011 event. The esurvey only consisted of minor consequence data such as basic demographic data and opinions. The survey was designed to gain an overall picture of social behaviour at the Falls and day-to-day life to compare.

From the establishment of the research question and sub-questions asked in this thesis, the ability to identify and examine social capital in the Falls context, if present, was required. Numerous indicators for social capital underpin the questions asked in the esurvey. Indicators such as frequency of interaction, trust, access to resources, community participation, reciprocity, tolerance and political engagement (see ABS, 2000) assist to answer the research question through identifying whether social capital may exist at the Falls (and continue on beyond it). To add rigour to findings, all questions in the esurvey used in the study were based on previously tested research questions. They were directly linked to questions and/or indicators used and validated within the following frameworks and instruments:

- *ABS's Measuring Wellbeing: Frameworks for Australian Social Statistics 2001*
- *ABS's Measuring Social Capital: An Australian Framework and Indicators 2004*
- *ABS's 2005-06 Attendance at Selected Cultural Venues and Events survey*
- *ABS's 2006 General Social Survey*
- *ABS's 2007 Australian Social Trends survey*

- Centre of Comparative Social Surveys' *European Social Survey – Round 5, 2010/11*

The Measuring Wellbeing 2001 report by the ABS (2001, p. 282) provides a culture and leisure participation framework. The questions in the survey were also informed in part by this framework.

In this post-event esurvey, participants were asked to reflect back on their experiences with a particular emphasis on network maintenance post-event and the outcomes of their social interactions while at the event. The Seven Point Likert scale was chosen for appropriate questions in the esurvey. The Likert scale is a uni-dimensional method, as discussed by the Web Centre for Social Research Methods (2010). This is considered an appropriate approach given the single variables being questioned in each response. Likert scales afford a wide range of options on a numerical scale that is ordinal (see Statistics@Swinburne, 2011) and enable analyses such as correlations to be conducted (Pallant, 2005). A series of yes/no questions and open-ended questions such as 'if so/not, why?' and 'please explain' were included to identify opinions and experiences.

A target population is that from which it is required to derive information (Sarantakos, 2005). In Pegg and Patterson's (2010, p. 91) study they state:

The target population for the study were visitors to the TCMF [Tamworth Country Music Festival] in January 2008. A suitable study respondent was defined as any individual aged 18 years or older who was present in a specified geographical region at the time the research was undertaken and who did not reside in the Tamworth region.

The target population for the esurvey was similar in that it was all attendees of the Falls 2010 aged over eighteen years of age. Considering the target population sample of people eligible to participate in the study, predominantly younger people, it was feasible to utilise online techniques to create and disseminate the survey (Walter, 2010c). This approach maximises researcher time and produces ready-made data sets contained within an electronic database of responses. The online approach also enabled participants to complete the esurvey at their leisure within a six-week period. It was designed to be user-friendly and respondent-completed (Veal, 2011).

The online, web-based SurveyMonkey tool (SurveyMonkey, 2010) facilitated this process. The SurveyMonkey tool is a tried and tested tool used within universities and industry. The utilisation of online, web-platform tools proved to be a productive approach to gathering suitable data for this study. The SurveyMonkey tool was selected from an array of online esurvey tools as it is quick and easy to use and offered scope for the cross-tabulation of data sets (SurveyMonkey, 2010, 2011). SurveyMonkey also allows for the creation of a web-link to an esurvey (SurveyMonkey, 2010). This is viewed as an efficient means of data collection given the target audience. The SurveyMonkey tool enables data sets to be converted into SPSS format (IBM, 2011) for data analysis.

Follow-up and reminder techniques are a key to increasing response rates (Veal, 2011). The use of the SurveyMonkey web-tool, a website, a social media interface and the Falls email subscriber list facilitated rapid and easy transmission and collection of information for the esurveys. The esurvey link was promoted via a media release (University of Tasmania, 2011), through status updates on the Leisure Spaces Facebook page (Hawkins, 2011a), through a website created by the researcher called Leisure Spaces (Hawkins, 2011b) and emails by Ashlorien Management Pty Ltd, owners of the Festival, to their email subscriber list. These were staged over the six-week survey period and were interfaces with which the



researcher was intimately familiar. This process aligned with Walter's (2006a) practical and resource perspectives on research.

### **2011 Survey Questionnaire**

The 2011 Falls survey was conducted on-site by a team of four researchers from a marquee in the Marion Markets section of the Falls site.<sup>24</sup> The survey was entitled *Weak Ties in Leisure: The Role of Outdoor Music Festivals Survey* (see Appendix 2). It was designed to take four to five minutes to complete. Participants were asked questions in four sections – Marion Bay Falls Social Networking, Marion Bay Falls Vibe, Technology and Marion Bay Falls Spend. Like the esurvey, the face-to-face survey also captured basic demographic information such as gender, age, income level and educational achievement. Only people who attended the 2011 Festival and those aged eighteen or over were permitted to complete the survey, again primarily due to difficulties in obtaining parental consent. Participants could only be identified by their email address which participants supplied voluntarily for a prize draw of two tickets to the 2012 event. The survey only consisted of minor consequence data such as basic demographic data and opinions.

In the 2011 survey the questions were designed to deepen understanding of data and insights gathered from the Falls in phase one of the study and also to check findings. However, a particular focus of the questions related to the place characteristics. The approach explored further some unexpected insights that emerged from phase one. For example, a strong finding in phase one was the role that 'vibes' played in their experience – the vibe of the attendees (the people), the vibe of the venue (the place) and the festival vibe (the activity).<sup>25</sup> Thus in phase two a specific focus was to illuminate more about the role of the vibes and how they interact to create the festival experience. Questions were also asked in a yes/no/unsure or an agree/disagree/unsure format to identify if participants agreed

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<sup>24</sup> The Marion Markets are described in chapter four.

<sup>25</sup> These vibes are discussed in detail in chapters five and six.

with what the researcher had identified from the 2010 study. The remainder of the questions were designed for participants to tick the appropriate response/s – for example, *Which forms of Social Technologies do you use on a daily basis?*

### **3.4.3 Qualitative Data: Focus Groups and Interviews**

Schuller (2007, p. 23) states that “the act of investment should be recognizable, even if it cannot be recorded quantitatively”. Identifying social capital necessitated the use of qualitative methods because a criticism of social capital research is that it lacks qualitative insight (Blackshaw and Long, 2005). Gibson and Connell (2012) also argue for qualitative theorisation to better understand the impact of festivals. In this research, in depth focus groups and interviews were the qualitative methods employed.

A focus group, as the name suggests, is a group of individuals collectively interviewed with a particular focus in mind (Ruddell, 2011). Focus groups can be used to recall or stimulate “experiences shared by members of the group” (Fontana and Frey, 2005, p. 704). The elucidation of shared experiences, especially social experiences, from an emic perspective (Atkinson et al., 2001, Murchison, 2010, Ruddell, 2011) is integral to the exploratory nature of this study. Equally, a focus group can be exploratory. Fontana and Frey (2005, p. 704) argue that “exploratory interviews are designed to establish familiarity with a topic or setting ... [and] the questions are usually unstructured or open-ended”. For this reason the focus group method was chosen for the 2010 component of the study. This approach assisted to unearth the weak ties phenomenon.

Stake (2005, p. 455) proposes that when the researcher “can become experientially acquainted with the case” it is then embraceable. He continues on to suggest that “through observation, enumeration, and talk, the researcher can personally come to perceive that nature of the case” and that “when the researcher can see and inquire about the case personally ... that researcher can come to understand the case in the

most expected and respected ways". The personal observation and participation process involved in a focus group can assist to triangulate the understanding phenomena to add greater validity to findings. Also, it can be advantageous to 'do what the locals do' by participating in their activities as this can elucidate further stories and build rapport (Joseph and Donnelly, 2012).

According to Fontana and Frey (2003, p. 90), "There is a growing realization that interviewers are not the mythical, neutral tools envisioned by survey research". In an interview, the facilitator, researcher or moderator can become a part of the discussion itself as they guide and shape discussion to elicit responses that are deeper and more meaningful. Fontana and Frey (2003) also argue that "interviewers are increasingly seen as active participants in interactions with respondents, and interviews are seen as negotiated accomplishments of both interviewers and respondents that are shaped by the contexts and situations in which they take place" (p. 90-91). The interactions may also be guided and shaped through the facilitator obtaining a level of trust through demonstrating a deeper understanding of the participants' context. Fontana and Frey (2005, p. 696) afford an example of this when discussing work by Douglas (1985) where he "advocated revealing personal feelings and private situations to the interviewee as *quid pro quo* of good faith". They continue on to emphasise that "he [Douglas] failed to see that his openness was merely a technique to persuade the interviewee to reveal more and be more honest in his or her responses". Murchison (2010, p. 101) strongly emphasises that "*the ethnographic interview should not be an interrogation*" meaning that it is a learning process not an authoritarian approach. He also argues that "you can learn a lot by being *part* of a conversation without completely orchestrating it" (p. 102).<sup>26</sup>

Ruddell (2011, p. 122) observes that "the in-depth interview is among the most popular of qualitative methods used in leisure, recreation and tourism research". Sarantakos (2005) describes them as talking questionnaires. Travers (2010, p. 290)

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<sup>26</sup> Emphasis by Murchison (2010).

argues that “in-depth interviewing is an exciting and challenging activity” in that the interview can be undertaken in an array of different social settings using different groups and processes. Ruddell (2011, p. 122-123) explains that “the in-depth interview is a conversation between the researcher and respondent designed to explore a topic in greater depth than can be had in the traditional quantitative survey”.

Veal (2011, p. 242) suggests that “conducting a good in-depth interview could be said to require the skills of a good investigative journalist”. To assist a good investigative journalist to investigate, an interviewer should create an interview guide (Travers, 2010). An interview guide assists with ensuring that all desired information is elicited but to allow conversation to flow. The use of structure in an interview can shape discussion but the level of structure is what will determine how the interview is conducted (see Ruddell, 2011, Veal, 2011). Veal (2011, p. 243) explains that “the interaction between researcher and subject is, as far as possible, similar for all subjects”. A semi-structured approach was adopted in this study. This approach allow a degree of open-endedness to not limit the field of enquiry but with an associated agenda of scope for questioning (Ruddell, 2011, Veal, 2011). The shape of the in-depth interviews and focus groups and the involvement of the researcher as a participant in the process are explored in the next section to describe the format of the qualitative methods.

### **2010 Facilitated Focus Group Discussions**

The focus group prompt questions, using an interview guide (Travers, 2010), were designed to build on and complement the questions to be asked on the esurvey. These were predominantly open questions to explore participants’ motivations to attend the Falls, feelings about their experience at the Falls and how and where they have formed social ties. Similar to the esurvey, indicators of social capital such as frequency of interaction, trust, reciprocity and tolerance (see ABS, 2000) underpinned the questioning. The researcher elected to camp in ‘tent city’ rather

than camp in the Very Important Person (VIP) area<sup>27</sup>. The conducting of focus groups at the Falls meant that participants could be engaged within their space, or their temporary home.

The focus group discussions (n=17) were semi-structured (see Appendix 3) to allow the time to flow naturally according to the response of the participants but also to scope interaction. The interviewer's role was to operate as a facilitator rather than interviewer. The researcher guided and shaped discussions according to responses. Similarly to Douglas's research mentioned in the previous section (1985 in Fontana and Frey, 2005, p. 696), the researcher often mentioned that he was camping and was an avid music fan to assist with developing "good faith" (p. 696). He also wore similar clothing and spoke in language that was similar to the words of the participants. The researcher was a participant in the discussions to assist participants to feel at ease but not a deliberate influence on content. Focus groups were selected at random and conducted *in situ* using an interview guide at the participants' campsites. Focus group members were permitted to invite 'neighbours' who they had met at or prior to attending the Falls as this could add to the social story of their festival experience. The focus groups were asked to describe their motivations, experiences and social activities at the Falls.

Contained within these focus groups was an element of participant observation. When referring to work by Tedlock (2005), Denzin and Lincoln (2005, p. 16) stated that "participant observation has become the observation of people". During the focus groups the researcher was guided by the interactions between the participants. This process enabled the researcher to flow with the conversation but also afford those with a 'smaller voice' to be included.

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<sup>27</sup> This is an area at the Falls that is only accessible by staff, artists, volunteers and the like.

Participants were advised that no recorded audio material would be made public and that they were to use a pseudonym for the duration of the discussion. The use of a pseudonym was designed to place the participants at ease and proved to be a positive engagement tool as did the use of a microphone in a music festival setting.

### **2011 One-on-one and Two-on-one Targeted Interviews**

Like the 2011 survey, a series of semi-structured interviews was conducted with attendees (see Appendix 4). The use of interviews with either one or two people at a time enabled targeted, yet open, questions to be asked to deepen understanding of the Falls responses obtained in phase one of the study. These interviews were more structured than the focus groups discussions of the previous year. They still contained a level of fluidity for ebbs and flows but the discussion was contained to responses to the questions asked.

Similarly to the focus group process, participants were advised that no recorded audio material would be made public and that they were to use a pseudonym for the duration of the discussion. Once again, this process proved to be a positive engagement tool as did the use of a microphone. The use of a pseudonym again in 2011 confirmed that this approach to interviewing is an effective tool for research in these kinds of settings. It is recommended that this approach be considered for future festivals and events research.

### **3.5 Methods of Data Analysis**

The data in this thesis is analysed via three staged processes. Stages one and two relate to the 2010 and 2011 data collection series respectively. Stage one of the data analysis is a thematic analysis of the qualitative data while the quantitative data is analysed using a statistical software package (SPSS). The second stage builds on and enriches the statistical and thematic information gained in stage one by adding

further data to these. In stage three all statistical data and themes are examined utilising an ABS (2004) social capital framework and Oldenburg's (1999) eight characteristics of third places. Stage three enabled a viewing of the data and associated themes to identify characteristics of social capital and third place. This process assisted to utilise 'lenses' to provide deep and rigorous insight toward answering the research question for the thesis. These analysis methods are outlined below.

### ***3.5.1 Raw Data Analysis: Quantitative Analysis***

SPSS (see IBM, 2011) is a computer-based program that can be utilised for statistical analysis. It is commonly used by researchers for obtaining descriptive statistics, frequencies and graphic representations of data (IBM, 2011, cited in Statistics@Swinburne, 2011). For this reason, SPSS software is considered an appropriate tool to code the quantitative data from the 2010 esurvey and the 2011 survey. Descriptions, frequencies and graphs for this research project were extracted using the SPSS functions. SPSS Version 19 was utilised as it was the most recent version purchased by the University of Tasmania at the time of data analysis. Data from these surveys was also analysed to identify alignment with elucidated themes from the focus groups.

### ***3.5.2 Raw Data Analysis: Thematic Analysis***

Walter (2010a) says that "thematic analysis is the most commonly used form of analysis in qualitative research, particularly research involving interviews". The approach in this research was to identify emergent themes (Walter, 2010a, Veal, 2011) and then to "establish the existence of relationships on the basis of what individual people say and do" (Veal, 2011). In this study thematic analysis of audio recordings involved coding of possible recurring themes and common phrases (Walter, 2010a, Veal, 2011). The approach to the thematic analysis for this study is similar to open coding in grounded theory (Walter, 2010a). In open coding "the

emphasis is on looking for similarities and differences, and grouping of information into categories” (Walter, 2010a). The objective is to identify and extract quotes and words that could be grouped together under category names. As stated by Saldana (2009, p. 3),

“a code in qualitative inquiry is most often a word or short phrase that symbolically assigns a summative, salient, essence-capturing, and/or evocative attribute for a portion of language-based or visual data”.

Basit (2003) extends this to include sentences and paragraphs.

Qualitative data from the 2010 collection series within both the esurvey and focus groups was categorised into six themes and then numerous sub-themes. Quotes obtained were coded manually to identify key messages and themes for analysis. To begin the coding process, quotes from the audio recordings of the focus group interviews were transcribed followed by the extraction of qualitative responses to the esurvey results via SPSS. The quotes and responses were manually coded for words and short phrases (see Saldana, 2009) and sentences and paragraphs (see Basit, 2003) through the use of colours assigned to numbers. The coded words and phrases were then grouped together, where appropriate, under a suite of six broader emergent themes.

The quantitative data collected through the esurvey was also examined to identify alignment with the themes. A significant number of the questions aligned with the themes and were grouped accordingly. This process assisted to triangulate data (see section 3.6) within the mixed method approach.

The themes, while still emergent, provided a framework for scoping further questioning within the 2011 collection series. Some themes were dominant in 2010 due to the scope of questioning whereas others were more subtle as they came to the fore organically. For example, how social bonds were formed was a dominant



theme in 2010 due to a significant number of questions asked of participants relating to their social connectivity. Place factors were a key example of more subtle theming from the 2010 series as very limited questioning related to the concept of place. However, it was clear in the analysis that this theme required further data to analyse as the qualitative coding indicated social connectivity often being underpinned by the roles of space and place. Basit (2003, p. 144) argues that coding categories “cannot be created in isolation from other categories”. This was an important factor within this research as numerous themes were integrally linked while many quotes from participants were multi-coded.

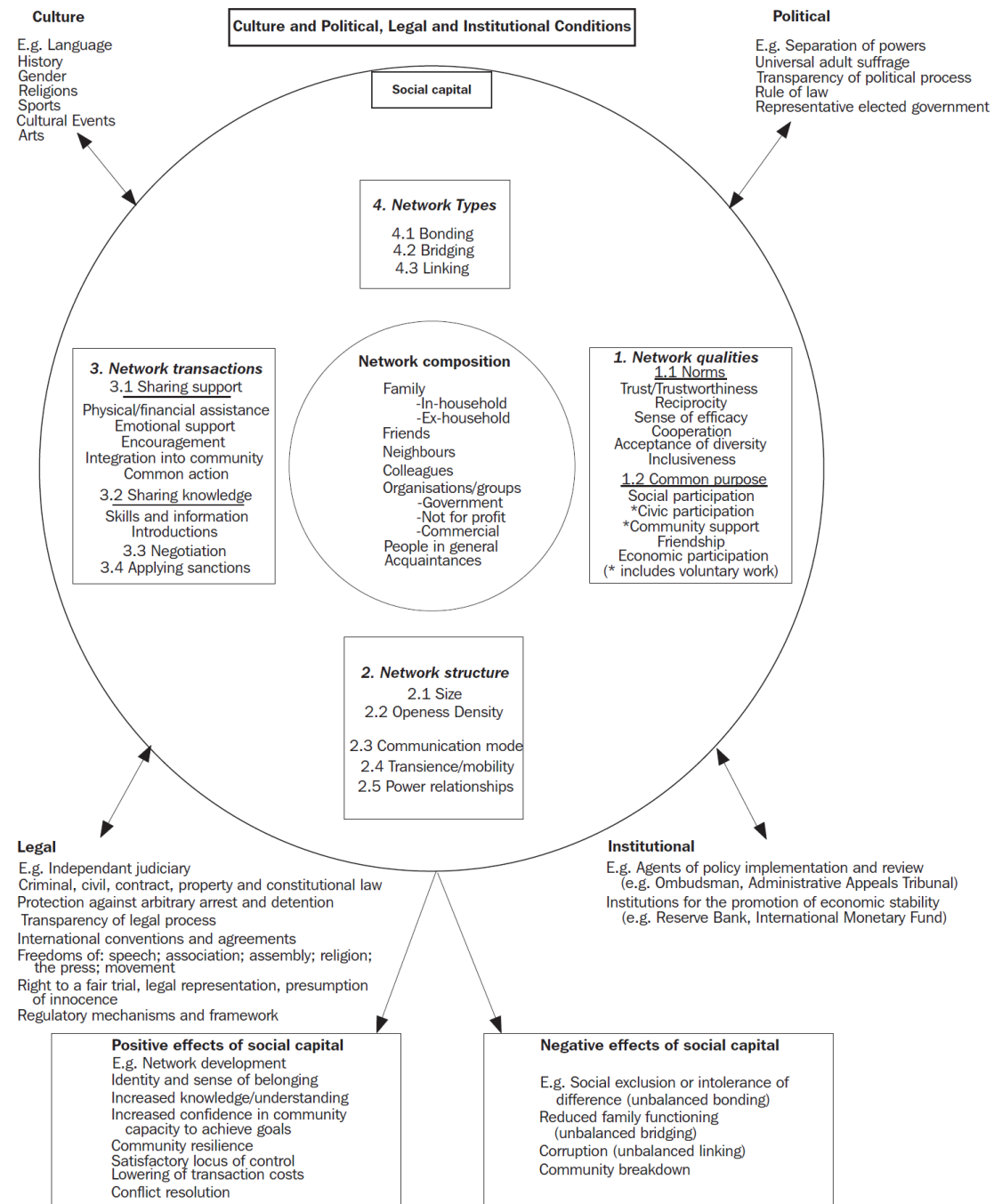
The qualitative data collected within the 2011 series added further insight and clarity to these themes. There were many insights and observations drawn from the coding of the 2010 series that required clarification and exploration. The process of coding for the 2011 series also utilised numbered colours to identify key words and phrases. The more well-defined themes from 2010 enabled a smooth coding process where themes were confirmed and expanded upon, whereas the more subtle themes from 2010 led to a refinement as further insight and clarity was gained. As with the 2010 thematic analysis, quantitative data from the 2011 collection series was also incorporated into the respective themes to provide further insight into and alignment with themes and to complement the qualitative quotes obtained. This process solidified the themes for the thesis for further analysis.

### ***3.5.3 Australian Bureau of Statistics Framework Analysis***

A critical question for this thesis (and indeed for studies of social capital) is how can social capital be measured? This study draws on a number of resources to assist in the interpretation and representation of accumulation and delineation of social capital. One approach is that employed by the ABS. The ABS (2004, p. 14) utilises the *Culture and Political, Legal and Institutional Conditions* framework (see Figure 7) for understanding the concept of social capital and contexts surrounding it. The ABS (2004, p. 17) states that, “[t]hese conditions provide the context in which social

## Chapter Three – Methodology

capital operates. Networks are equated with social capital in the framework diagram. The effects of social capital arise from the operation of networks”.



**Figure 7 – Culture and Political, Legal and Institutional Conditions Framework**

(Source: ABS, 2004, p. 14)

Although the ABS is primarily focussed on quantitative data collection and analysis, this framework can be utilised for qualitative analysis. Given that this study is undertaken in an Australian context, the ABS framework is seen as an appropriate framework to explore the Falls data. While the conditions themselves surrounding the central social capital circle are not directly tested in thesis as they are not within the scope of this study, utilising the social capital circle for testing for evidence of social capital at the Falls is. The four components within the social capital circle in the framework (namely *network qualities*, *network structure*, *network transactions* and *network types*) are utilised in chapter six to test for evidence of social capital in the study while assisting to triangulate the quantitative and qualitative data collected with social capital theory. The application of the ABS framework not only provides an Australian context but also reveals a form of social capital exhibiting in the case study that portrays an array of distinctive qualities, levels and strengths.

### ***3.5.4 Oldenburg's Characteristics of Third Place Analysis***

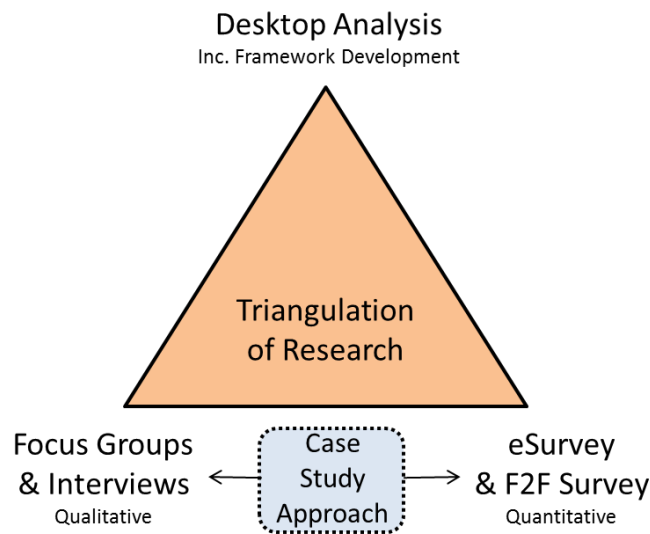
Like the ABS Framework analysis, a third place 'lens' is placed over the data sets, post-coding, to explicate a 'context' (see NESF, 2003 in Schuller, 2007) that may foster social capital. Oldenburg's (1999) eight characteristics of third places are employed to examine the data. These characteristics are:

1. On neutral ground
2. The third place is a leveler [sic]
3. Conversation is the main activity
4. Accessibility and accommodation
5. The regulars
6. A low profile
7. The mood is playful
8. A home away from home

Oldenburg's third place attributes, when applied to the case study data sets, suggest the presence of third place and identifiers of third place characteristics. This process yields insights as to how places like the Falls might be considered as a third place. It also assists to generate speculative ideas as to what might be new third places into the future and the criteria that best describes them.

### **3.6 Reliability of Findings**

Walter (2006a, p. 11) argues that "triangulation describes the combining of different research methods" and Stake (2005, p. 454) sees it as "a process of using multiple perceptions to clarify meaning, verifying the repeatability of an observation or interpretation". This study triangulates a literature review, quantitative methods (the esurvey and the face-to-face survey) and qualitative methods (focus groups, interviews and open-ended questions in the surveys) contextualised with informal participant observation within the focus groups and interviews (see Figure 8). This process assists in gaining "the advantages of each method while also reducing the limitations of a single method" (Walter, 2006a, p. 11). Through this approach the research "gains credibility by thoroughly triangulating the descriptions and interpretations, not just in a single step but continuously throughout the period of study" (Stake, 2005, p. 443).



**Figure 8 – Triangulation of Methods**

Portes (2000, p. 10) argues that “there is a need for both logical clarity and analytic rigor in the study of these processes, lest we turn social capital into an unmitigated celebration of community”. The choice to triangulate quantitative and qualitative research methods in the study with the literature review is based on the need to collect data from multiple perspectives. This approach is designed to dig deeper to gain insights, to explore experiences longitudinally and to be able offer both quantitative numbers and qualitative insights to the expected audiences of the research project. Utilising the ABS (2004) framework and Oldenburg’s (1999) characteristics of third place as tools of analysis assists to provide further rigor to the data.

An online Random tool (Haahr, 2011) was utilised to randomly draw the winners of double passes to the 2011 and 2012 Falls events in Marion Bay.

### **3.7 Limitations of the Study**

It is acknowledged that social research does come with axiological idiosyncrasies depending on factors such as the social landscape, the participants’ world view and

the researcher's values (Walter, 2010b). The researcher's perspective as a former practitioner in local government and the related practitioner's dilemma influence the framing of the research. Walter (2010b, p. 15) claims that social research being "value free is next to impossible". However, the use of a mixed methods approach in this research may minimise the effect of what Husey and Husey (1997, p. 48, cited in Fraser, 2014) refer to as the value-laden bias associated with qualitative research.

Although other population groups also attend the Falls in smaller numbers, participants in this research are predominantly from generations X and Y. The extent to which findings from these population segments may hold for society more broadly is canvassed in chapter seven of this thesis.

The Falls is described in this thesis as an atypical, or outlier case. While not necessarily unique when compared to the contemporary music festival landscape it still has its own idiosyncrasies (see chapter five). Researchers need to be wary of generalising from a single case study (Arksey and Knight, 1999). Stake (2005) raises the issue of basing wider assumptions on an outlier case and he states, "People find in case reports certain insights into the human condition, even while being well aware of the atypicality of the case. They may be *too* quick to accept the insight." (p. 456).<sup>28</sup> It is not assumed that the Falls is a representative case nor that the findings can be generalised across the wider community or the contemporary music festival landscape per se. This case is utilised to explore the Falls as a context to tease out findings that can be tested in future research.

Stake (2005, p. 456) expresses concern about the researcher telling their own story and choosing what goes in the report as "less will be reported than is learned". He furthers this by arguing that "it may be the case's own story, but the report will be the researcher's dressing of the case's own story". It is not possible to represent the whole case detail in this thesis as "the whole story exceeds anyone's knowing and

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<sup>28</sup> Emphasis by Stake (2005)

anyone's telling" (Stake, 2005, p. 456). He also feels that it is "risky to leave it to the case actors to select the stories to be conveyed" and that a balance has to be found between telling the stories of the actors as dictated by them and the insights drawn by the researcher. The use of the participants' words in this thesis has been implemented to minimise the impact of a "researcher's dressing".

In regard to the use of questionnaires, these too come with sampling and end-user limitations such as exaggeration, under-reporting, accuracy of recall and sensitivity (Lynch and Veal, 2006, Veal, 2011). Survey questionnaires are also subject to the participants' understanding of the questions and whether they answer them "*truthfully, accurately and fully*" (Lynch and Veal, 2006).<sup>29</sup> Esurvey questionnaires can hold a bias toward those who have access to a computer Veal (2011) also argues that esurveys are easily treated as junk mail. The 2011 survey carries an extra limitation as well in that participants had to visit the Marion Markets to encounter the survey marquee. (Walter, 2010c, Veal, 2011). As participants self-selected to complete the surveys, sampling biases may also have occurred. Attempts to minimise the impacts of potential biases include mass promotion of the 2010 esurvey via the Falls email list and the prominent location of the survey marquee within the Marion Markets for the 2011 survey. As stated previously, the questionnaires that are utilised in this study are to gain insights, not to be representative of the population. The biases noted are not believed to have afforded a significant impact on the research.

The focus groups in 2010 hold limitations as a method in that it was only groups that were located in their campsites at the time of the researcher approaching that were asked to participate. Numerous groups declined to be interviewed. It was attendees from Tasmania who seemed to be more frequently located in their campsites; hence a majority of focus group interviews were conducted with Tasmanians. The interviews hold similar limitations in that it was only people who approached the

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<sup>29</sup> Emphasis by Lynch and Veal (2006).

stall who were asked to participate. In addition, the interviews were conducted in the Marion Markets which was found to not be conducive to interviewing for two primary reasons. The first was the close proximity to the Field Stage in regard to the decibel level of the music being played; the second was the significant number of people willing to participate in the survey which made for difficulties in allocating resources to interviews. The interview participants were, in the main, chosen following the researcher hearing a story that they were conveying or had conveyed to the researcher. This approach was the primary window to secure participants.

Overall themes are drawn from the data collected and generalised to enable a grouping of information to analyse. The ability to interact with every actor in the case was impossible given the researcher's resources. Therefore, the data collected comes with the caveat that this is an exploratory case with limitations but with rigour in data collection. In addition, no comparisons are drawn between other cases. The exploratory nature of this study to uncover themes and stories does not come with the aim of comparing informal leisure contexts. The comparison of different contexts is not within the scope of this thesis.

### **3.8 Ethical Considerations**

No particular societal group was targeted (for example: ethnicity, age, religion, sex) however minors were excluded from the study due to the potential barriers to obtaining parent/guardian consent in a remote location. Participants were simply engaged as attendees of the Falls. Personal consent for participation in the 2010 survey and 2011 survey methods was achieved through the participation in the survey. Verbal consent for the tent-site focus group discussions and the individual interviews conducted at the Falls was obtained and recorded on a digital recording device. The verbal consent approach was adopted as participants were in a relaxed leisure environment and minimal formality was considered appropriate. An information sheet was made available to all participants.



It was anticipated that the research may elucidate deviant behaviour (for example: Rojek, 1999, Hobbs, 2001, Jenks, 2006, Lynch and Veal, 2006, Veal, 2011), however deviance was not a specific focus of this thesis. The exclusion of people who were involved in deviant behaviour would create an unreal and less valid context for the study. It is argued that this fits within the scholarly values of academic freedom and inquiry as described in the National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research (National Health and Medical Research Council et al., 2007).

No personal details of any participant have been or will be made public as part of this study. The only exceptions are the identification of the winners of the 2010 esurvey and 2011 survey prizes. These people volunteered to go into the draw for their respective prizes of free tickets to the following year's Falls through a process of providing their email address on the survey form. These two names were announced by organisers of the Falls in their e-newsletters. Stake (2005, p. 459) exhorts that "those whose lives and expressions are portrayed risk exposure and embarrassment, as well as a loss of standing, employment, and self-esteem". It was assumed for the focus groups and the interviews that the use of pseudonyms would minimise the elucidation of identifiable information and reduce the potential for exposure. The pseudonyms have been used in this thesis and associated publications. Some of these names have been adjusted in this thesis to minimise confusion between participant names, appropriateness of the names for publication, facilitate anonymity and ease of readership. The use of pseudonyms proved to be a sound approach to adopt as participants appeared to embrace the concept to not only reduce their potential exposure but also to build on the relaxed and fun atmosphere that is characteristic of festivals.

# **Informal Leisure as a Source of Social Capital Formation: *A Festival Case Study***

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## **4. Festivals and the Falls: The Context**

## **4.1 Introduction**

This research is focussed on the nature of social capital in informal leisure contexts and utilises the Falls held annually since 2003 in Marion Bay, Tasmania as an outlier case study. This approach is to gain insights into contemporary social networks and place characteristics in informal leisure. There is a growing body of research focussing on “the social, cultural, and/or political impacts of festivals and events” (Arcodia and Whitford, 2006, p. 2). This research contributes to this emerging work. This chapter provides an overview of the role that festivals, especially music festivals, play in society and outlines developments in the festival ‘scenes’ in contemporary society. This overview emphasises the dynamic context of festivals.

Stake (2005, p. 454) suggests that a “case study facilitates the conveying of experience of actors and stakeholders as well as the experience of studying the case” and so chapter four is designed to provide the reader with an understanding of how the Falls operates: how it ‘looks and feels’. The Falls, as an atypical case, is a picture of uniqueness and contrast. These features peculiar to the Falls create a contextual mental image and set the stage for data collection and analysis. This chapter also provides a description of the participants involved in the study.

## **4.2. Festivals**

### ***4.2.1 What is a Festival?***

While what constitutes a festival is still contested (Gibson and Connell, 2012), a useful definition is: “a celebration of a theme or special event for a limited time, held annually or less frequently (including one-time only events), to which the public is invited” (Smith, 1990, p. 128 in Williams and Bowdin, 2007, p. 187).

Festivals should, ultimately, be fun (Wilder, 2004). The spaces in which they 'operate' are where people interact more informally, particularly as "the general public increasingly see festivals as a fun way to use their leisure time" (Gibson and Stewart, 2009, p. 32). Festivals "must be an experience that is different from or broader than day to day living" (South Australian Tourism Commission, 1997, p. 2 in Arcodia and Whitford, 2006, p. 3). They can facilitate belonging (Duffy and Waitt, 2011), afford a place of ritual (Gingery, 2004), define communities (Levi, 2004) and "frequently advance laudable goals of inclusion, community, and celebration" (Gibson et al., 2010, p. 281). Gibson et al. (2010, p. 291) suggest that "cultural festivals are emotional, playful expressions of local culture, national pastimes, or global subcultures". They are generally social in nature rather than economically driven (Gibson and Connell, 2012).

Festivals are often hallmark events, as described by Allen et al. (2002, p. 13), because these are "events that become so identified with the spirit or ethos of a town, city or region that they become synonymous with the name of the place, and gain widespread recognition and awareness". For example, "festivals in rural and regional Australia are deeply connected to geography – they are expressions of local places, as well as local people" (Gibson and Stewart, 2009, p. 15). Hallmark events hold significance as traditions, are often recurring events and can afford competitive advantage (Getz, 1997 in Allen et al., 2002).

Festivals are also often the 'glue' that binds communities (Gibson and Connell, 2012, p. 9). Gibson and Stewart (2009, p. 33) suggest in this context that building community is a common aim of festival organisers and the "best festivals build communities out of audiences". They also argue that some "festivals help to redefine the nature of life in the places where they occur while others build on the life that presently exists" (p. 15). Clearly, social capital can occur through events of this kind (Deery and Jago, 2010) and demonstrates "the potential of being maintained far beyond the short life of the festival" (Arcodia and Whitford, 2006, p. 11). Gibson and Stewart (2009, p. 29) summarise the spirit of this when they state:

Marketing a place through festivals enables celebration of natural links, local produce and industry, seasonal transitions or other endogenous cultural traits and at the same time, creates an association with place that lingers in the national imagination.

As a consequence, “against a backdrop of rural decline, many places have sought to reinvigorate community and stimulate economic development, through staging festivals” (Gibson and Stewart, 2009, p. 2). Festivals have positively turned communities around economically and helped to redefine them (Gibson and Connell, 2012). Gibson and Connell (2012) suggest that some music festivals can improve economic and social capital. Improving economic and social capital in small towns can ‘put them on the map’ (Brennan-Horley et al., 2007).

For example, since the beginning of this millennium, Tasmania has witnessed a significant increase in the volume and status of festivals. These range from one-day music festivals such as *MS Fest* in Launceston, *Soundscape* in Hobart and *A Night on the Terrace* in Burnie; umbrella-marketed festivals such as *Ten Days on the Island*, *Burnie Shines*, *Colours of Wynyard* and Music Tasmania’s *Amplified Festival*; large-scale, community-wide festivals such Greater Hobart’s *Museum of Old and New Arts’ Festival of Music and Art (MONA FOMA)*, *Devonport Jazz in July* and Launceston’s *Junction Arts Festival*; community festivals such as the *Bloomin’ Tulips Festival* in Wynyard and the *Tasmanian Circus Festival* in the North-East; food and wine-focussed festivals such as the *Taste Festival* in and around Hobart, Launceston’s *Festivale*, Latrobe’s *Chocolate Winterfest* and Devonport’s *Taste the Harvest Food & Wine Festival*; community festivals that have evolved into trade fairs such as the *Tasmanian Craft Fair* in Deloraine and *Agfest* near Carrick; and camping festivals such as the *Forth Valley Blues Festival*, the Motorcycle Riders Associations of Tasmania’s *Tas Rally*, the *Cygnet Folk Festival* and the Falls. Most of these festivals, especially the music festivals, cluster along a “well-trodden tourist route” (as explained by Gibson and Connell, 2012, p. 18) although the Falls intimates to be located away from the tourist route (Gibson and Connell, 2012).

The festivals identified above bring attention to the range of aims ascribed to festivals: from community celebration, social networking and cultural awareness through to niche marketing, product branding, place branding and mass tourist attraction. All three tiers of government in Australia have played a significant role in funding many of these events. This reinforces a growing interest in what Gibson and Kong (2005) describe as the cultural economy.

In the context of a growing cultural economy, Gibson (interviewed by CAMRA Producer, 2012), lead researcher on extensive festivals study in Australia, observes that “with population decline, aging and uncertainty around the future of rural Australia many places are putting on festivals as one means to bring tourists in, bring their communities together or simply to have fun”. Festivals can bring together “scattered farmfolk, young and old and disparate subcultures; they blend attitudes, enlarge social networks and encourage improvements in social cohesion” (Gibson and Stewart, 2009, p. 5).

“Festivals qualitatively improve local economies and encourage cooperation” (Gibson et al., 2010, p. 290) and it is suggested that the “cumulative economic impact of festivals has the potential to be significant for rural economies” (Tindall, 2011, p. 74). While the more direct economic benefits of festivals and events as tourism and employment can be argued (for example: Janeczko et al., 2002, Hill Strategies, 2003, Maughan and Bianchini, 2004, Arcodia and Whitford, 2006, Daniels, 2007, Gibson and Stewart, 2009, Carrell, 2011), the understanding of the social and cultural benefits of festivals and their flow-on value to the wider society is not well formulated in policy, scholarly research or social commentary. Furthermore, a narrow focus on the economics does not present a complete picture of festival impact (see Gibson and Connell, 2012, p. xi). Arcodia and Whitford (2006, p. 15) argue that further research is required to investigate the connection between festival attendance and the development of social capital – not (necessarily) benchmarked within an economic framework. This thesis will focus on the former concerns.

#### **4.2.2 The Contemporary Music Festival Scene**

In their extensive study into festivals in Australia, Gibson et al. (2011) identified 288 music festivals in Victoria, New South Wales and Tasmania alone. They note that festivals have “grown exponentially (worldwide) in the last two decades” (Gibson and Connell, 2012, p. xi). The growth in music festivals is evident and their role in placemaking, place branding, social interaction, culture creation and ‘feel good’ activity is noticeable in the Australian landscape (for example: Gibson and Davidson, 2004, Brennan-Horley et al., 2007, Gibson and Stewart, 2009, Daly, 2009, Gibson et al., 2010, Pegg and Patterson, 2010, Gibson and Connell, 2012).

Music celebrations have been entrenched in many cultures throughout history (Gibson and Connell, 2012). In the late 1960s the large-scale, multi-day contemporary music festival scene began with outer-city and rural concerts such as the *Monterey International Pop Festival* (1967). This was soon followed by the *Isle of Wight Festival* (1968-1970), the *Woodstock Music and Art Fair* (1969) and the *Pilton Festival* (1970). It is interesting to note that the *Isle of Wight Festival* returned in 2002 following more than 30 years in hiatus after the Parliament in England lifted the ‘Isle of Wight Act’ that had banned concerts on the Isle (Red Funnel, 2012). Arguably, the re-establishment of such a symbolic event underscores to audiences that the large-scale, regional camping-based festival had made its comeback. Pilton Festival, now known as *Glastonbury Festival of Contemporary Performing Arts*, continues to this day (Glastonbury Festival, 2012).

The contemporary music festival scene today in Australia is dominated by big city, one-day concerts such as the *Big Day Out* and *Soundwave* (see Gibson and Connell, 2012). In contrast, some festivals have established themselves as reflective of the Monterey, Woodstock, Isle of Wight and Glastonbury concepts. Examples of these are the Falls, *Splendour in the Grass*, *Golden Plains*, *Woodford Folk Festival* and *Pyramid Rock Festival* where a return to a camping style with a multi-day entertainment format is favoured. Contemporary music festivals have become a key

focus for music entertainers, music industry entrepreneurs and commentators in recent times given the downsizing of album sales (for example: Warman, 2010).

There was a significant boom in music festivals in the 2000s when the music industry transformed itself “into a predominantly live industry” (Eltham, 2010). In the music festival scene this resulted in an explosion of competing events. However, since then the industry has witnessed a shift. Large scale music festivals like *Glastonbury* are struggling to remain viable and there is a growing sense “that people have seen it all before” (Daily Mail, 2011). Indeed one commentator suggested that 2013 was arguably “a year to forget for festivals” in Australia (Mann, 2013b). “The festival glut has seen poor ticket sales result in cancellations and downsizing across the country” (Easton, 2012). Gibson and Stewart (2009, p. 32) found:

Some festival organisers feared that there was a ‘limit’ to this [the proliferation of festivals in Australia], and that eventually festivals would start to fail as communities became ‘festivalled-out’. This was particularly the case for music festivals. The growth in music festivals has not necessarily been matched by either a growth in audiences, or growth in the number of high quality local acts available to hire for performance.

As a consequence, a raft of non-camping, multi-band music festivals are being cancelled on a regular basis across Australia, primarily due to low ticket sales. In recent years these include festivals such as:

- *Funk ‘n Grooves Festival 2011* (The Festival Ladies, 2011)
- *Good Vibrations 2011* (Clarke, 2011)
- *Mission to Launch 2011* (Cunningham, 2011)
- *One Movement for Music 2011* (Collins, 2011)
- *Rewind 80s Festival 2011* (Mann, 2011c)
- *Heatwave 2012* (Cunningham, 2012)
- *MS Fest 2012* (Darke, 2012)
- *Raggamuffin 2012* (Mann, 2011b)



- *Soundscape Festival 2012* (Smith, 2011)
- *Sunset Sounds 2012* (Mann, 2011a)
- *Supafest 2013* (Cunningham, 2013) – postponed
- *Big Day Out 2014* – Second Sydney Show (Mann, 2013a)

On a more local level, this oversupply may also be affecting Tasmania. Smith (2011) suggests:

The 'Festival glut' theory has been discussed widely over the last twelve months and with Tasmania now hosting MONA FOMA [Museum of New and Old Arts' Festival of Music and Arts] and Breath Of Life, it seems even the Apple Isle<sup>30</sup> is struggling with too much choice, not enough coin.

Yet, interestingly, camping festivals are still relatively popular in Australia. This is not to say that one-day mega-concerts like the *Big Day Out* and *Soundwave* are not popular but Australian camping events like the Falls, *Splendour in the Grass*, *Golden Plains*, *Woodford Folk Festival* and *Meredith Music Festival* seem to be surviving the festival oversupply. Similar trends are occurring internationally; for example: *Coachella* and *Burning Man* in the US, *Boomtown Fair* and *Leeds Festival* in the UK, *Festival Internacional de Benicàssim* in Spain and the *Winnipeg Folk Festival* in Canada.

Further evidence of the sustainability of camping-style festivals is the Falls announcement of a third sister event in 2013. This event was held for the first time in Byron Bay, New South Wales, to complement its Lorne (Victoria) and Marion Bay (Tasmania) events. The Lorne and Byron Bay events sold out quickly in 2013 (Teague, 2013). In 2013, the owners of the Falls and *Splendour in the Grass* announced that they were joining forces for the 2013 editions of the Falls (Newstead, 2013b). Yet, two camping festivals in *Pyramid Rock Festival* (Newstead, 2013a) and *Peats Ridge Sustainable Arts & Music Festival* (Fitzsimons, 2013) have

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<sup>30</sup> The Apple Isle is a colloquial name for Tasmania.

closed down. Both these festivals are New Year's Eve period camping-based festivals that compete directly with the Falls and *Woodford Folk* which suggests that the issue may be one of scheduling rather than festival over-saturation. Conversely, a new camping-based festival will fill the void of the *Pyramid Rock Festival* in 2014 (Fitzsimons, 2014). The *Beyond the Valley* festival will be "hosted on the same site as the ill-fated Pyramid Rock Festival" (Baroni, 2014) with "a shift away from the super festivals of the past to a boutique camping-style offering" that will be a "cultural and sensory experience" (Nick Greco, Director of Beyond the Valley festival, cited in News.com.au, 2014).

This begs the question as to what makes camping music festivals different and whether, therefore, these festivals are more than just about the music. Given that the Falls in Marion Bay is not located on the well-trodden tourist route of Tasmania (Gibson and Connell, 2012), this may point to other dynamics at work. Camping is an adventure. Festivals of this kind can sell their place characteristics as part of the festival package; for example: the location itself, the vibe the location creates, the non-music activities, the camping experience and the getting away from day-to-day lives. While camping away from city lights also reinvigorates one's natural body rhythms (University of Colorado Boulder, 2013) other research shows that camping builds social capital (for example: Henderson and Bialeschki, 1999, Foley and Hayllar, 2007, Colyn et al., 2008, Wallace, 2008).

Further, Gibson and Connell (2012, p. 19) argue that most music festivals lack "musical place authenticity". Is this an additional piece to the puzzle? Events such as the camping festivals mentioned can take advantage of the natural surroundings, landscapes and ambience to create something unique and authentic in both social and physical ways.

### 4.3 Case Study: The Falls Music and Arts Festival

Gibson and Connell (2012) argue that some music festivals can redefine a regional place and put its name on the map. This is the case for the Falls because Marion Bay is synonymous with the Falls. According to Ashlorien Management Pty Ltd (2010),

The Falls Music & Arts Festival is held from Dec 29th to Jan 1st each year on a beautiful farm nestled on the Tasmanian east coast near Maria Island and Hell Fire Bluff at Marion Bay.

The Falls is a contemporary music festival. It is held annually and concurrently in Lorne in Victoria, Byron Bay in New South Wales and Marion Bay in Tasmania. In Tasmania it is situated in a picturesque location of productive farmland, rugged hills and pounding waves (see Figure 9).



**Figure 9 – Aerial Photo of the Falls in Marion Bay Looking North-Easterly**

**(Source: Falls Music and Arts Festival, 2012c)<sup>31</sup>**

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<sup>31</sup> Photograph used with the permission of Ashlorien Management Pty Ltd.

Allen et al. (2002) would describe the Falls as a hallmark event in Tasmania. For example, “the 2012 events [of the Falls] will see the tenth anniversary of the Tasmanian leg and the 20th of the Victorian” (themusic.com.au, 2012).<sup>32</sup> The Falls in Tasmania offers a capacity of approximately 16,000 attendees with the significant majority of these electing to camp. According to the owners of the Falls, Ashlorien Management Pty Ltd (2010), “Camping is an integral part of the Falls Festival. Camp with your mates, get to know your neighbours, check out all the action at your door or just chill and enjoy the beautiful environment”. They argue that the “live-in community aspect” is very important as patrons “from all walks of life camp together for 2-3 days, learning to live cooperatively side by side, helping each other and sharing experiences and celebrations. It is a wonderful community building and bonding event” (Daly, 2009, p. 17).

The Falls camping area accommodates people from a myriad of socio-economic, educational and cultural backgrounds in one location. Daly (2009, p. 16) explains:

A common misconception is that The Falls Music and Arts Festival is a youth event and whilst it is certainly important for young Tasmanians, it reaches right through the community and is an event for everyone, regardless of age.

The Falls is a significant event on the Tasmanian events calendar. The “Falls generates more tourism for the state than any other single event” (Beniuk, 2012). The Falls claimed a contribution of \$31.45 million to the Tasmanian economy for this event (themusic.com.au, 2012). In addition to the direct economic gains, Simon Daly from Ashlorien Management Pty Ltd explained: “I’ve seen the difference the festivals have made to their communities, not just in economic terms, but just as importantly, the social and cultural impact, particularly in Tasmania. We created the festival in Marion Bay for Tasmanians, all Tasmanians” (themusic.com.au, 2012).

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<sup>32</sup> In this context, the term leg refers to an event within a series of events such as a live show within a concert tour.

The Falls has been deliberately located in a regional area to provide “social and cultural benefits” (Gibson and Connell, 2012, p. 201) and is budgeted on a sell-out (p. 211). “The Falls Music and Arts Festival remains one of the most efficiently run events in Australia” (FestivalChannel.com.au, 2012). Nevertheless, it has been heavily reliant on government support as the event operates on very slim margins (Gibson and Connell, 2012). According to Simon Daly, Founder of the Falls, (cited in Pro Bono Australia, 2012):

Each festival attracts 40-50% of attendees from interstate. In 2011, the festival generated more tourism than any other single event in Tasmania with some 7,742 visitors travelling from interstate to enjoy 3 days of music, performance and film in Marion Bay’s idyllic natural setting. Staying an average of 9.23 nights, these visitors contributed to the \$31.45m in economic benefit generated by the 2011 Tasmanian event.

In a boost to support the efforts of the Falls, Graeme Wood, a philanthropist and founder of Wotif.com, donated an undisclosed amount to the owners of the Falls to keep it going (Fair, 2012). Wood argued that “as the economy diversifies in order to become sustainable into the future, there are golden opportunities to play to Tasmania's potential and strengths in areas such as cultural and eco-tourism” (Young, 2012). He said that “the *Falls Music and Arts Festival* is a case study of the tangible economic impact that creative events and cultural and eco-tourism can have for the Tasmanian economy” (Young, 2012). Simon Daly responded: “We've consciously made it the best value and most accessible festival in Australia and it's rewarding to see such a broad mix of people, of all ages, connecting and having a great time together” (Pro Bono Australia, 2012).

This Falls is conducted over three days, during which time a temporary town is established. A respondent to the survey conducted as part of this research described this space as a “tent city” (see Figure 10). During the period of the Festival this tent city, in effect, becomes Tasmania’s seventh city (albeit temporary) behind

the official proclaimed cities of Burnie, Devonport, Launceston, Glenorchy, Hobart and Clarence. Unlike showcase, one-day, Australia-wide mega-music events like *Soundwave Festival* and the *Big Day Out*, the Falls offers scope for interaction over time and in a more diverse array of contexts similar to other significant annual camping festival events like *Splendour in the Grass* in South-East Queensland, the *Woodford Folk Festival* and the *Byron Bay Bluesfest*.



**Figure 10 - Looking over 'Tent City' to the Beach**

**(Source: Falls Music and Arts Festival, 2014)<sup>33</sup>**

The Falls provides three outdoor music stages, namely the *Valley Stage* (located in the *Main Arena* – see Figure 11), the *Field Stage* (located in the *Field Arena*) and the *APRA Stage*;<sup>34</sup> a Disc Jockey (DJ) tent (located in the *Field Arena*); a self-contained arts experience named *The Village*; the *Marion Markets* (see Figure 12); camping grounds with a network of 'streets' named after places in Tasmania; access to the

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<sup>33</sup> Photograph used with the permission of Ashlorien Management Pty Ltd.

<sup>34</sup> This stage is sponsored by the Australian Performing Rights Association (APRA).



Marion Bay beach; and an array of food, beverage, merchandise and event assistance and information tents. For comfort, attendees are provided with free shade tents, fresh water, mobile coffee carts, composting toilets and waste receptacles. An area for VIPs, staff and volunteers is allocated north of the Main Arena where hot showers are also provided. The Falls is not only demonstrating itself as an eco-leisure activity but also an eco-tourism event (as described by Ron et al., 2008).



**Figure 11 - The Dirty Love on the Valley Stage**

**(Source: Wynwood, 2011)<sup>35</sup>**

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<sup>35</sup> Photograph taken by an attendee at the Falls and used with the permission of Ashlorien Management Pty Ltd.



**Figure 12 – Marion Markets at Night**  
**(Source: Falls Music and Arts Festival, 2011)<sup>36</sup>**

When the researcher arrived for his first festival in 2010, he was greeted by picturesque paddocks set amongst trees that overlooked Marion Bay to the East. The camping areas, located to the south and east of the Main Arena, looked uphill in a northerly and westerly direction respectively. Weather conditions were fine and warm. Attendees take advantage of the proximity (2km walk) to Marion Bay beach to explore, surf or swim (see Figure 13). Appreciation and enjoyment of the natural environment is part of the Falls experience and the beach is a part of this. Gibson and Wong (2011) suggest that some festivals use the venue of a festival as a nice backdrop whereas others can build environmental awareness. The Falls does both.

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<sup>36</sup> Photograph used with the permission of Ashlorien Management Pty Ltd.





**Figure 13 - Marion Bay Beach**  
**(Source: Falls Music and Arts Festival, 2011)<sup>37</sup>**

The first day (29 December) is 'set up camp' day as there is no live entertainment. It is a day to pitch tents, settle into camp and explore the site. The Marion Markets, vendor tents/vans and service tents open on day one and are a focal point for settling in. It is on days two and three when the 'on the ground' participant research begins in both 2010 and 2011.

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<sup>37</sup> Photograph used with the permission of Ashlorien Management Pty Ltd.

#### **4.4 Participant Profiles and Research Activity**

As discussed in chapter three, several methods were adopted in this research to seek input from participants – focus groups and an esurvey in 2010 and interviews and a survey in 2011. This section outlines the profiles of the participants in the research and how the research process unfolded on the ground.

##### ***4.4.1 2010 Participant Profiles and Research Activity***

At the 2010 event the researcher opted to camp with the general admission attendees and not in the VIP area (as he was permitted to do by the organisers). This decision afforded an opportunity to experience what the majority of attendees experienced. The researcher's campsite was located in the South-East corner of the Festival site near the intersection of Loongana Lane and Dunalley Alley (see Figure 14). This campsite spot offered a large space on the edge of protected wilderness. The location of the researcher's campsite highlighted the expanse of the Falls venue. The researcher's campsite location at the end of Loongana Lane was fortunate because passing by many campsites opened up opportunities for interviews. People generally enjoyed the focus group activity as it became 'part of the experience'. Seventeen campsite focus groups in 2010 were conducted during daylight hours. This was when there were more people located in tent city. These were opportunistic interviews where the researcher selected groups mingling around their campsite. Focus group discussions became more extended further into the event and there was more willingness to divulge information. There was limited interest in speaking to the researcher once headline acts starting appearing on stages. The Main and Field Arenas appeared to be more popular later in the day as the headline acts started hitting the stages.



**Figure 14 - The Falls Site Map 2010**  
(Source: Falls Music and Arts Festival, 2010)<sup>38</sup>

The demographic make-up of these focus groups was as follows:

- Focus Group 1 – Fifteen males and four females (aged around 18-23). From Tasmania.
- Focus Group 2 – Two females (aged around 18-20). From Tasmania.
- Focus Group 3 – Three females (aged mid-to-late 20s). From Victoria.
- Focus Group 4 – Six males and two females (aged early 20s). From Tasmania.
- Focus Group 5 – Four males (aged around 30). From Tasmania.

<sup>38</sup> Image used with the permission of Ashlorien Management Pty Ltd.

- Focus Group 6 – Two females (one aged around 20 from the Northern Territory and one aged around 50 from Tasmania) and one male (aged late 30s or early 40s) who had been working overseas.
- Focus Group 7 – Two males (one aged early 20s and one aged around 30) and two male onlookers who joined in mid-interview (aged mid-20s). From Tasmania.
- Focus Group 8 – Three males and two females (all aged mid-20s). From Tasmania.
- Focus Group 9 – Six females (various ages from early 20s to approximately 50). From Tasmania.
- Focus Group 10 – Five males (ages ranging from mid-20s to early 30s). From Tasmania.
- Focus Group 11 – Three males and one female (aged mid-30s). From Tasmania.
- Focus Group 12 – Three males and two females (aged late 20s to early 30s). From New South Wales.
- Focus Group 13 – Four males and two females (aged late teens to early 20s). From Tasmania.
- Focus Group 14 – Two males and two females (aged early to mid-20s). From Tasmania.
- Focus Group 15 – Seven males (aged early to mid-20s). From Tasmania.
- Focus Group 16 – Five males and one female (aged early 20s). From Tasmania.
- Focus Group 17 – Three females (aged late 40s to early 50s). From mainland Australia.

As outlined in the previous chapter, approximately one month after the 2010 Falls event was conducted, an esurvey was sent out via the Falls' official eNewsletter and 381 completed responses were received. Of those who responded to the demographic questions (Q3 2010 and Q20-24 2010), forty-four percent had been to

the Falls more than once, seventy percent were aged under 30 years of age, sixty percent identified as female, forty-seven percent earned at least \$40,000 per annum and forty-four percent held a Bachelor degree or higher, including ten respondents having completed a Doctoral level qualification. “The festival claims that 40 to 50 percent of attendees are from interstate” (themusic.com.au, 2012) and the esurvey indicates that forty-one percent of participants were from interstate or overseas.

### ***4.4.2 2011 Participant Profiles and Research Activity***

The return visit in 2011 for follow up data collection consisted of a survey and thirteen targeted in-depth interviews conducted via the research tent in the Marion Markets. The Marion Markets is a place where people often spend the daytime hours looking around and, as claimed by numerous visitors to the research tent, a place to ‘kill time’ before the headline acts hit the stages. It is also the main pedestrian link between the Field and Valley Stages and holds a casual ‘browsing’ vibe. The research marquee was designed to reflect this vibe.

The times for the survey were set in three blocks of two hours on days two and three – 10am to 12pm, 1pm to 3pm and 4pm to 6pm – in a deliberate attempt to catch those who wander by. Three research assistants on a roster system assisted the researcher to collect 556 survey responses. Of those who responded to the demographic questions (Q17-Q22 2011), forty-four percent had been to the Falls more than once (very similar to the 2010 esurvey), eighty percent were aged under 30 years of age (compared to seventy percent for the esurvey), sixty-two percent identified as female (sixty percent on the esurvey), fifty-three percent were from interstate or overseas (forty-one percent on the esurvey), forty percent earned at least \$40,000 per annum (forty-seven percent on the esurvey) and forty-eight percent held a Bachelor degree or higher (forty-four percent on the esurvey), including thirteen respondents having completed a Doctoral level qualification, which is three more than on the esurvey. These demographics are similar to the

results on the esurvey although it did capture a more even split of Tasmanians compared to those who have visited from interstate or overseas.

The interview participants were targeted as they were filling in a survey. They were selected opportunistically – particularly when they instigated conversations about an issue raised in the survey that had been identified in the 2010 data collection and analysis. The demographic make-up of the in-depth interviews was as follows:

- Interview One – Two males (both aged early 20s). From New South Wales. First Falls Festival in Marion Bay.
- Interview Two – One female and one male (both aged early 50s). From Tasmania. Second Falls Festival in Marion Bay.
- Interview Three – One male (aged mid-20s). From Tasmania. Second Falls Festival in Marion Bay.
- Interview Four – One male and one female (both aged in late 20s). From Tasmania. Attended seven and six Falls Festivals in Marion Bay respectively.
- Interview Five – One female (aged in early 30s). Recently relocated to Tasmania from the United Kingdom. First Falls Festival in Marion Bay.
- Interview Six – One male (aged in mid-20s). From Victoria. First Falls Festival in Marion Bay.
- Interview Seven – One female (aged in late 20s). From Queensland. First Falls Festival in Marion Bay.
- Interview Eight – Two females (both aged in early 20s). From Queensland. First Falls Festival in Marion Bay.
- Interview Nine – One male (aged in late teens). From Victoria. First Falls Festival in Marion Bay.
- Interview Ten – One female (aged in late 20s). From Tasmania. First Falls Festival in Marion Bay.
- Interview Eleven – One male (aged in early 20s). From Tasmania. Second Falls Festival in Marion Bay.

- Interview Twelve – One female (aged in late teens). From Tasmania. Second Falls Festival in Marion Bay.
- Interview Thirteen – One female (aged in early 20s). From Tasmania. Fourth Falls Festival in Marion Bay.

#### **4.5 The Falls as a Place of Social Leisure**

One of the critical aspects of this study is to ensure that the case study selected has sufficient characteristics and attributes to allow the researcher to examine not only the characteristics of the place (as a context and a third place) but also to see how an informal leisure context might foster and facilitate interaction that creates social capital – or at least provides a setting to examine if this happens or not. This chapter has afforded a profile of the Falls setting and an overview of the participants. It has demonstrated a useful and interesting cross-section of participants and their involvement in the data collection for this study. The chapter also provided a useful guide as to how the site was laid out, the geography in terms of environment elements such as vistas and the types of meeting and gathering places. The following chapter examines the data in this context.

# **Informal Leisure as a Source of Social Capital Formation: *A Festival Case Study***

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## **5. “There’s Some Good Random Stuff”: Analysing the Data**



## 5.1 Introduction

The previous chapters outline the theoretical underpinning to this research and establish a case study (the Falls) within which to investigate the research question. This chapter analyses the data collected from that case study drawing on the esurvey and focus group data from 2010 and the interviews and face-to-face survey from 2011. The analysis of these data suggests six broad thematic areas. These themes are:

1. The Role of Vibe in Place
2. A Place to Meet and Make Friends
3. Impact of Time
4. Norms, Trust and Social Rules
5. Communication
6. Health and Wellbeing

Each theme is explored through a descriptive narrative which weaves the quantitative and qualitative data together. This approach is adopted as it enables the overall theme to be explored and to elucidate nuance. Participant quotes are used to enhance the narrative and ‘bring the actors to life’. As this research seeks to gain insights into the intersection of weak-tied social capital, informal leisure, space and places and third place, the use of participant words allows for the tone and language to infuse the data and analysis. Qualitative questions from both the esurvey and the face-to-face interviews and focus groups are woven into this analysis and analysed with the quantitative data sets to complete the narrative.<sup>39</sup>

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<sup>39</sup> Quotes have been included with minimal editing. While the quotes often include spelling and/or grammatical errors, they are deliberately provided verbatim.

## **5.2 Theme One: The Role of Vibe in Place**

An initial look at the data shows that the words used to describe the Falls included: awesome, random, chilled, relaxed, friendly, social, cruisy, hang out, cool vibes, everyone, electric, wicked and unique. Marcus (focus group six 2010) commented that the Falls was “very relaxed ... very comfortable”. Ninety-six percent of respondents to the 2011 survey believed that there was a Falls vibe (Q11 2011). A further seventy-eight percent of respondents believed that the Falls was special to them (Q11 2011).

This vibe hints at an identity; a brand. As Paul (interview eleven 2011) states: “[The Festival vibe] just lifts. Lifts your inhibitions a bit I suppose. It’s got a, it’s a bit funny like, I don’t know, it’s hard to explain”. Equally, the setting of Marion Bay adds to this vibe. It seems that this vibe comes from an intermingling of activities, people and place characteristics creating a dynamic, all of which is ‘sensed’ but not necessarily easy to articulate. As one respondent says: “It’s been 1 day and I’m already in love with the festival!” (survey 2011). This was a common response.

To facilitate a clearer understanding of this theme about vibe, three sub-themes are explored: vibe created by the physical characteristics of Marion Bay, the people who attended and the Falls itself as a festival. It seems that the Falls is different from other festivals. At the end of this theme the discussion will focus on whether this point of difference comes from the intersection of these different aspects of “vibe” and what, in turn, this reveals.

### **5.2.1 The Place Vibe**

Eighty-six percent of respondents to the 2011 survey felt that being in a unique place was important to them (Q11 2011). According to some participants in this study, Marion Bay as a setting for the Falls was unique: an escape into another place.

Tasmanians involved in the study were often proud of their place stating, “the view to the valley stage from the hill with the ocean and mountain in the background is stunning and makes me feel proud to be a Tasmanian. It’s almost spiritual” (survey 2011). Yet, clearly the visitors appreciated it also. An attendee from urban Queensland claimed that the “air here is amazing” (survey 2011). Shawshank<sup>40</sup> (interview one 2011) was passionate about how Marion Bay and its uniqueness made him feel:

[It has] got like a real, umm, combination of tranquillity but, umm, exquizzivity ... it’s hard to explain. It’s almost like a utopia in the sense of where it’s located. Like the beach is just around there. It’s always different land that you haven’t seen before. It’s set in the hills of green grass land. It’s just great. Yeah, it’s really unique.

For some Marion Bay was simply a “beautiful place to hold a festival! :)” (survey 2011) and this response to the question of location was consistent: “Love the location” (survey 2011). The term ‘beautiful’ was used frequently to describe the location. For example, Mary (interview eight 2011) was enthralled:

So pretty ... that is one thing that sets it apart from anywhere else. It’s just the most beautiful location ... It’s just so pretty ... our camp site is in the field of little flowers and there’s like a nice hill behind us with trees and then there’s the ocean ... It is very pleasant, it is.

It seems that the place vibe, therefore, was not simply the Falls site but rather for some it was the combination of beach, the mountains, the air and more. Again in the words of another participant (Jane – interview eight 2011), the location was “beautiful ... a mixture of the whole, like, bush area up here and the fields where we are and then to wake up and see the ocean and, like, the main stage looking out over the ocean and the hill”. Edmund (interview one 2011) agreed:

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<sup>40</sup> The names noted in chapters five and six are either the pseudonyms chosen by the participants themselves as part of the research or pseudonyms chosen by the researcher to increase anonymity and minimise confusion between pseudonyms (see chapter three for justification of this approach).

## Chapter Five – “There’s Some Good Random Stuff”: Analysing the Data

[Marion Bay is] a beautiful location ... I like the mix between the bush and the water and it’s a great idea having access to the beach that really sort of breaks it up so you wake up in your tent and just go jump in the water. Get you ready for the day. So we love it here. It’s like country and it’s perfect.

This place vibe was variously described. One interviewee (Fox – interview five 2011), a recent emigrant from the United Kingdom to Tasmania, was inspired by the interaction of landscapes and the interpretation of them:

It’s just stunning here. It’s so beautiful. It’s just amazing to see. To look at the main stage and see the sea and hills and the sky behind it, and, umm, when you’re not looking at the sea you can see hills and trees and, umm, it’s nice to see a few decorations around, you know, people have made an effort like the welcome to Falls and they’ve wrapped the trees up in the colourful paper. Umm, it’s the setting ... just beautiful and the drive down was very nice too.

And another (Stephanie – interview seven 2011) drew all the landscape elements together stating:

[W]hat would normally be used for grazing land perhaps during the rest of the year, so that’s really cool ... the beach is a shortish walk away. I particularly like being able to see the main stage, mountains and the beach in the same view, like, that’s really special and probably something that’s specific only to the Marion Bay Falls, so that’s really special ... I’ve sent that picture to friends ... and I don’t know if that’s done on purpose or it’s the best place for the stage. That really is one of the things that makes the Marion Bay Falls like particular to this area.

It is also evident from the participants that, as the literature of camping and festivals suggests, the location of a festival can be a significant factor of the experience. Sarah (interview four 2011) revealed that the Falls location was:

[B]eautiful ... It’s set beside the ocean there with the hills and the paddocks and meadows. I think it’s just beautiful and everything is always so green and having the ocean and swimming and, yeah, just an amazing place to have a festival I think ... I think that that is maybe even 70% of it for me. It’s just the location that it is so beautiful here and, umm you know, when you’re sitting up on the Valley Stage there and just look over to the left and you can see the ocean, the island and the headland out there. Yeah, it’s just gorgeous, yeah.

Many participants in the study commented on the close proximity of the beach to the Falls event site with comments such as “great idea to be near the beach” (survey 2011). This feature was a special attribute and for some a strong pull factor to attend. For example (Ocean Ranger – interview 9, 2011):

[Marion Bay is] beautiful. It’s so good being by the water and I live by the water. Like, I couldn’t live away from it so spending somewhere like New Year’s and being with mates like this is, umm, good to be near the water ... we went down the beach that’s awesome. Being able to go down the beach, that’s great ... just chill out there, get back to the beach and I’ve always liked living by it. So it’s sort of my way of escaping. I love how it’s set here on a farm and everyone’s sort of camping together and, you know, looking over the beach. Beautiful.

As was identified in the literature, the place vibe connects the festival to the broader leisure and tourism narrative. A number of interviewees emphasised this as a part of their decision to attend. Edmund (interview one 2011) stated that the “scenery here is just amazing. Tasmania’s an awesome place and I like it that it’s [the Falls] in Tasmania. It gives you the opportunity to explore once you’ve finished the Festival”. Similarly, Frankie (interview six 2011) stated: “This is the first time I’ve been to Tassie, so it’s just like an amazing place. It’s beautiful” and,

I’ve never been to Tassie and the towns are so small ... like my mate compared Tassie to Alaska ... ‘cause he just came back from Alaska and, umm, thinks it’s a lot like Alaska. Small towns, ah, you know. Just good nature and trees and, you know, and just luscious grass.

This connection of place and vibe seems to reflect not only the attractive landscape characteristics and proximity to ocean and forest but also scale and accessibility in the mention made of small towns and comments like those made by Fox (interview five 2011): “it’s a great little Tasmanian music festival and it’s in a beautiful location as well”. This feeling was echoed by an esurvey respondent in 2010 who said, “It’s my favourite place to be & I’m stoked to say that my kids are going to be sharing the experience with me this year, I can’t wait!”

### **5.2.2 The People Vibe**

The data suggests that, as well as a place vibe, there exists a people vibe. As described by an esurvey respondent in 2010, “People extremely relaxed, friendly, very little/no aggo,<sup>41</sup> cool vibe”. For Edmund (interview one 2011), an attendee from New South Wales, this people vibe had something to do with the kinds of people who attend. He says,

I think that, like, a lot of people that go to festivals are sort of similar ... there’s a lot of, ah, alternate people here which I think is really cool ... there’s not too much drinking ... I haven’t seen too many very drunk people which I think is a good thing. Everyone’s cautious of their health and what not so, yeah, I reckon that’s a Falls person. Someone that’s here to, umm, have a good time and be sensible and get into the scene as much as they can.

A Falls person was often described as being “chilled and fun”. For example, “everyone’s just being hippies” observed Barbara (focus group four 2010). “There’s

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<sup>41</sup> Aggravation.

quite a few hippies”, said Stephanie (interview seven 2011). “Everyone’s kinda hippyish”, stated Mary (interview eight 2011). “Gypsy type ... Interesting” agreed Jane in the same interview. Yet, while there was some discussion as to a Falls-type person, simultaneously there was a view that this was a family-safe place for all ages.

According to the 2010 esurvey, eighty-seven percent of respondents either agreed or strongly agreed that most people were friendly at the Falls (Q8 2010). This was a common sentiment. For Lola (focus group seventeen 2010) it was about attitude: “if you have a certain vibe about you, you attract a certain vibe”. For Jane (interview eight 2011), “everyone was really friendly and so easy going”. In particular, festival participants felt that you can “just walk around and you can start talking to people” (Jane – interview eight 2011) and “generally there’s, like, lots of people that are just, you know, are around just to chat to people and enjoy the vibe” (Stephanie – interview seven 2011). At the Falls it is not only that attendees are friendly but it seems also easy strike up a conversation.

Mary (interview eight 2011), from urban Queensland, felt there was a particular Falls person compared to those people in her regular day-to-day life. “We are not used to it [the friendly vibe]. Where we live people are so pretentious and fake and horrible and it’s nice to come here to meet other people, friendly nice people”. Mary felt welcome at the Falls, as did at least eighty-nine percent of respondents to the 2010 esurvey (Q8 2010) and ninety-seven percent of respondents to the 2011 survey (Q11 2011). Two separate attendees from the United Kingdom felt the same – “I’m here from Scotland ... Thank you falls for making us overseas people feel so welcome” (survey 2011) and “the vibe’s been really good. The crowd is, oh, really nice and pleasant people” (Fox – interview five 2011).

What is of interest is not only the commentary on the attitude, the friendliness and the opportunities to connect and chat but also the way in which this created a social environment for some. Fox (interview five 2011) emphasises this when saying:

[The] social environment really makes a big difference to the entire day ... the atmosphere and the people really make a difference to your enjoyment of the band ... It can absolutely make or break your day. The atmosphere, the people and here is really lovely.

A number of respondents linked this social environment to a particular Tasmanian flavour. Tasmanians were described as being casual and less pretentious. “Tasmanians have lovely manners” (survey 2011). Eighty percent of respondents to the 2011 survey agreed that ‘Tasmanian festivals have a friendly vibe’ (Q11 2011) and Aaron (focus group twelve 2010) reiterated this Tasmanian-friendly sentiment saying that Tasmanians were “happy to have 15,000 people in their tent”.

The friendliness also extended to attendees’ views of the staff and volunteers. Reflecting this were numerous responses offered in 2011 survey such as:

[T]his is my first trip to falls and the staff are incredibly friendly and helpful.

Friendliest and most helpful volunteers of any festival I've ever been too. Very, very well organised and it's always a pleasure to be here. Keep up the awesome work :).

[P]oliet and friendly staff.

[T]his is my first time at the falls festival and I've been very impressed with the entertainment, people and hospitality.

The data suggests that the Falls creators seem to have fostered a culture of friendly service-oriented behaviours – creating the basis for a positive social environment for attendees.



### **5.2.3 The Festival Vibe**

Place and people are necessary for a festival to ‘be’. The festival is of itself a set of entertainment activities. How these activities are assembled and presented will shape the nature of that festival and its “vibe”. This section examines what the data revealed about the festival activities and the nature of the vibe experienced.

For Ginger (focus group eight 2010), the Falls has a “pretty good [vibe]. It’s mellow. It’s nice”. Similarly others felt this stating: “Falls is the most chilled out friendly happy festival ever” (survey 2011). Eight-seven percent of respondents to the 2010 esurvey were motivated to attend the Falls to soak up the environment (Q7 2010) and ninety-one percent of respondents attended to experience festival life (Q7 2011).

Respondents to the 2010 esurvey were generally very positive in their reactions to their festival experience; for example: “It was the best festival experience I’ve ever had! It was such a relaxed and happy vibe” and “it was a fantastic event - more relaxed & friendly & chilled than expected”. Paul (interview eleven 2011) echoed this sentiment but offered further insight saying: the Falls “certainly opens your eyes to something you thought you’d never do or try or get involved in or experience for that matter”.

This offering something ‘extra’ was identified by others. For Boris (focus group five 2010) it was an eye-opener – “there’s some good random stuff like, unexpected a little bit”. For Stephanie (interview seven 2011) it was the clustering of festival-goers – “this many people camping is ... an unbelievable experience”.

Others focussed more on experiences of the entertainment activities – the Falls ‘life’. Edmund (interview one 2011) found that “it’s very relaxed, its good energy, it’s, ah, a lot of fun really, everyone’s just having a good time” and Mel (focus group nine 2010) attended for “music ... atmosphere ... vibe” because “it’s sorta *relaxed* and ...

it’s nice to ... hang out and just enjoy the music”. Others focussed more on blending camping, talking and music entertainment. Charmaine and Fekeisha (focus group fourteen 2010) kicked back in their campsite claiming “good vibe ... very relaxed” and “it’s so chilled out ... like, it’s just great ... very friendly, very relaxed ... The vibe is awesome”.

#### ***5.2.4 The Whole Vibe is Greater than the Sum of the Parts***

The three vibes of the place, the people and the festival appeared to combine together to create the Falls vibe. It was evident that the different dynamics within these vibes make the Falls different from other festivals. It appears that it is the combination of place, people and festival activities that affords the Falls a unique vibe and authenticity. Shawshank (interview one 2011) felt that the Falls is:

[S]ort of like a prize at the end of a tunnel. We have travelled a long way and it’s so relaxing here. It’s a beautiful location ... and it’s just good to, ah, hang out with all your friends and that sort of stuff and just comradeship and, yeah, just chilling around and listening to music, yeah. It’s good.

Similar sentiments are echoed in the esurvey results. For example, one 2010 esurvey respondent commented that the Falls is “one of the best in the world (esp Marion Bay!)” and another respondent to the survey (2011) summed it up by stating: “I’ve been to lots and lots of festivals before, this is my 1st Falls and it is excellent. Great atmosphere”.

Eighty-one percent of respondents felt that the Falls in Marion Bay was different from other festivals (Q11 2011). The data yields some interesting insights as to why this is the case. The data suggests that the need to be ‘cool’ did not appear to be a big driving force to attend. Only thirty-four percent of respondents to the 2010 esurvey felt that they were motivated (more than half of these only slightly motivated) to attend the Falls because it was cool to go (Q7 2010). Again this is

echoed in the 2010 esurvey feedback when one respondent advised that “Falls Festival Marion Bay was the most amazing experience of my life! It made me have an increased appreciation for music and artists. It made me realise not to be so superficial”.

Most participants surveyed in the 2011 research phase felt OK to be themselves at the Falls. Brooklyn (focus group twelve 2010) was happy to make note that “we were wearing tracksuit pants on the dance floor and no-one cared”. She appeared relieved that she could leave Sydney and feel like there were “no pretences ... I’ve had a smile on my face since I’ve been here”. When probed on this issue Brooklyn explained that “the people here have been more like ‘whatever’ whereas, I think, back in Sydney I go to concerts and festivals and there’s definitely you’ve gotta make a difference, make an effort”.

From the same focus group, Annabelle’s comments on this point are interesting. She describes it as “randomness” where “everyone just seems very relaxed ... Like it’s not all a big show like it is at other festivals in Sydney”. Mary (interview eight 2011) from the Gold Coast in Queensland explored this when she stated: “The vibe is ridiculously relaxed ... and chilled out ... I’ve never experienced anything like this before. It’s just so chilled out ... I can’t get over it”. Comparisons were drawn to a similar festival in Queensland – “long term *Woodford* [Folk Festival] attendee and you guys are doing a grouse job” (survey 2011).

The interplay of place, people and festival to create a vibe is something noted by numerous participants in the qualitative components of the research. Amisha (focus group nine 2010) sets the following elements as to what creates this vibe:

Generally it’s [the vibe] encouraging. Everyone gets along really well and there’s still a humungous plethora of people here and they’re all chilling and gelling wonderfully and even the initiative to pick up the recycling it helps people, you know, clean up and have a chat to them while you’re getting your bottle ... Yeah it’s really nice.

A succinct description of what creates this vibe is made by a respondent to the 2011 survey – “super fun, super friendly, super clean! :)”. Overall, it was evident that the Falls venue, the people themselves and the program of entertainment all had roles to play in shaping the vibe and they seemed to be intertwined. The specific vibes associated with place, with the people and with the festival activities combined to create a vibe and experience that facilitates social interaction and points to a context that can facilitate the formation of social capital.

### **5.3 Theme Two: A Place to Meet and Make Friends**

A second theme to emerge from the data centres on the Falls as a place to meet and make friends. When reflecting on why they came to the Falls, two attendees (Craig A and Craig – focus group seven 2010) felt that it was “just talkin’ to people ... just meeting new people I suppose. That’s what it’s all about isn’t it?” and “I just come for the music and the social side of things”. Others commented more broadly; for example: “Falls is a fantastic festival for meeting people and catching up with people” (survey 2011). As one attendee (Fox – interview five 2011) divulged, “everyone here is a friend” while another (Vanessa – interview four 2011) commented that he<sup>42</sup> had “never really talked to anyone down here that hasn’t appreciated it”.

However, beyond a vibe of spontaneity and easy interaction it is the way these interactions and meetings occurred which is of interest. The Falls was often described as a place where it was easy to meet people where different types of social bonds were forged.

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<sup>42</sup> Vanessa was male.

### ***5.3.1 Spatial Aspects of Meeting***

As discussed in chapter four of this thesis, the Falls in Marion Bay was temporarily the largest urban centre in Tasmania outside the proclaimed cities. While the Falls is large in population compared to Tasmanian urban centres in the Australian context of music festivals more broadly it is relatively small in population. Two-thirds of respondents to the 2011 survey believed that the size of the Falls was important to them (Q11 2011). A number of features are identified.

First, some like Annabelle (focus group twelve 2010) from urban New South Wales argued that it was a space factor stating that “at Lorne [the Victorian edition of the Falls] I felt like the campsite itself was really crammed in ... I didn’t enjoy that part of it whereas here I’ve got a pretty nice space”. Numerous participants commented on the physical size of the Falls and its role in creating the Falls vibe. They spoke positively about not being crammed in but still being in close proximity to people and activities. Julio (interview ten 2011) believed that it was “perfect” with “plenty of space”. Paul (interview eleven 2011) echoed these sentiments saying: “it’s a fantastic, brilliant, beautiful size. It’s not too big ... everything’s compact ... it’s not spread out all over the place. You’ve got a majority of campers down there [pointing to the camping area].”

Stephanie (interview seven 2011) from Brisbane agreed:

[B]ecause we come from Brisbane we often go to, or we have in the past gone to, the, umm, Gold Coast Big Day Out which I’m pretty sure has more people ... we feel it’s [the Falls] on the smaller scale than, umm, other festivals that we’ve been to and we quite like that. Like, there’s still room to move so, umm, that’s pretty cool ... I would say that it’s nice ‘cause it’s smaller ... the Falls Festival was on one of our bucket lists and we’d always prefer to go to Marion Bay over Lorne because this one is smaller.

It is smaller in population than events like the *Big Day Out* but has a large layout to allow for personal space. Frankie (interview six 2011) argued similarly in that “it’s a monster venue ... Yeah I suppose I wasn’t expecting it to be this big but, ah yeah, it’s good like. Everyone’s pretty much got enough room or as much room as they want and then, like, you can walk to the beach”. Some others afforded similar responses: “I like the size of this Festival ... it’s not huge ... I like that it’s a smaller one ... the capacity isn’t over filled” (Fox – interview five 2011) and “it’s not over crowded and it’s good, sustainable” (Shawshank – interview one 2011). Shawshank continued,

I find like it’s a lot more personal than other festivals I’ve been to. I think it might be because of the fewer people that are here ... it’s just real relaxed and chilled.

Size seemed to come down to perspective, especially as to whether the reference was the physical size or attendee numbers.

Second, some others felt that that the numbers attending in that space facilitated interaction. Paul (interview eleven 2011) liked the fact that there were “just so many people in such a small spot”. These kinds of comments were among numerous references to the size of the Falls and its impact on social networking. Mary (interview eight 2011) for example, felt that the size assisted meeting: “I like it because it’s really small ... I think because it is so small we’ve ... run into people that we have seen here ... I definitely don’t think it would be as good if it was bigger.” Some participants argued that the Falls should not grow in attendance numbers. Sarah and Vanessa (interview four 2011) considered that “it’s nice that it’s kept to relatively lower numbers” and “you wouldn’t want a huge, you know, metropolis. Yeah I think it’s about right” respectively. In summary the view was well expressed by a survey respondent (2011) who simply recommended that the Falls should “keep it eco-friendly and small(ish)”.

An observation made by one 2010 esurvey related to the layout of the Falls and how that assisted in meeting friends and new people at the Falls:

[A]ll my friends don't fall under the same demographic, naturally i don't know everyone that everyone hangs out with. So wandering from camp to camp, you might find people you know who have gone down with other people, this is how you meet people at falls.

This observation suggests that a key spatial element was the way in which tent city facilitated interaction. A campsite was ‘home base’ and a place of meeting by many. While other Main Arena meeting sites were mentioned in the study as meeting places, the fall-back plan was generally the tent-site. Participants expressed this in a number of ways. Mel (focus group nine 2010) found that “we usually get people that just kinda hang out around here [the tent-site] when we get back [from the Main Arena]. There’s heaps of people that we don’t know that’s sitting around here.” We have “a bit of a chat, laugh at each other”. Karen (focus group six 2010) commented that while “we didn’t know many people [camping] around us ... you just get to know them and have beers with them and have a good time, yeah”. Bot (focus group eleven 2010) also reported that it was easy to meet people around the campsite: “We met a lady and her young son here and we’ve met another couple of people down the track and we’ve another big group of friends down the other side there”.

The tent-site appeared to not just be a tent-site but a ‘home’ – a place of comfort – and the home was in extremely close proximity to other homes. This context appeared to enhance the meeting opportunities. The sharing of a ‘backyard’, a sense of being a neighbourhood, played an integral role in building social ties for some participants in the focus groups and it seemed easy to do so. “[We keep] meeting others who were camping. Caught peoples eyes and they invited us over or we invited them over” (esurvey 2010).

The sense of community and opportunities for social interaction were so strong around the camp sites for some attendees that they spent a significant amount of time there. Gloria (focus group thirteen, 2010) summed this up by saying: “It’s more sort of a social area [the camping area] ... it’s such an effort to get to the stage so most of the time we are staying here”. Jimbo (focus group twelve 2010) was proud to say that neighbouring campers had “been up on our deck as well”. While the organisers of the Falls would consider the event an entertainment activity, it was clearly also a social focus for some.

Ebenezer (focus group sixteen 2010) found that having common interests helped to meet people in his neighbourhood:

I heard some random guitar players ... I just walk into their campsites where I hear music and tell ‘em they’re alright and then we just jam with ‘em ... You see, I play guitar ... meet people like that and then all their friends come out and just have a sing-a-long and a jam sess.

Although the campsite was very important for socialising, it wasn’t just the campsite where people met. Other everyday domestic necessities such as washing and toilet queues also facilitated impromptu conversations and ‘new friends’. As Annabelle (focus group twelve 2010) said: “I keep meeting girls at the trough washing”.

Finally, as expected, the Main Arena was also a critical spatial point for meeting. As one esurvey respondent found:

[T]he people I was with decided they wanted to go to sleep early, but I could still hear the music and decided to wander off down to the stage by myself. I ended up meeting these really cool people and had the best time!!!



It seems too that the Main Arena offered a vibe which facilitated interactions for some. Sarah (interview four 2011) found the opportunity for spontaneous conversations because she didn’t “feel those inhibitions down here, so yeah you end up making a few more friends that way”. Nevertheless, ‘home base’ and the community around the tent site were important. Genevieve (focus group eleven 2010) found “we ended up in the same spot last year ... the other time we came as well and everyone we know just knows that they’ll find someone at that spot”.

### 5.3.2 Easy to Meet

Thirty percent of respondents to the 2010 esurvey felt neither motivated nor unmotivated to meet people at the Falls and another seven percent were on the unmotivated spectrum (Q7 2010 – see Table 1).

Nevertheless, seventy-six percent of respondents to the same esurvey claimed to have met someone (Q10 2010) and forty-nine percent of respondents made a new friend while at the festival (Q10 2010).

	At The Falls	In the company of “Falls Friends” since The Falls
I met someone	291 (76.4%)	113 (29.7%)
I found out about a potential job	19 (5.0%)	39 (10.2%)
I joined, or was invited to join, a group	40 (10.5%)	51 (13.4%)
I learned or strengthened a skill	79 (20.7%)	66 (17.3%)
I undertook/was inspired to undertake further study	23 (6.0%)	48 (12.6%)
I became motivated on an issue or for a cause	56 (14.7%)	49 (12.9%)
I planned another time to meet	115 (30.2%)	91 (23.9%)
I made a new friend	185 (48.6%)	92 (24.1%)

**Table 1 – I experienced (Q7c 2010)**

Within data collected for the 2011 survey, respondents reinforced the meeting and friend-making findings from the 2010 esurvey when seventy-nine percent indicated that they had met someone (Q2 2011) and fifty-three percent had made a new friend (Q2a 2011).

Sixty percent of respondents to this same survey claimed that meeting someone at the Falls was important to them (Q4 2011). It was easy to meet people at the Falls. Numerous attendees commented on this stating that it is “very easy to interact” (Jimbo – focus group twelve 2010). When prompted others elaborated saying: “Yeah it’s really easy. It’s not like the little outside world. It’s like a little bubble here.” (Jane – interview eight 2011) and Fekeisha (focus group fourteen 2010) found that “you run into so many people you know but you also meet so many new people so everyone’s just friendly”.

Both the responses in the survey and interview data supported the view that it is easy to meet people at the Falls (Q3 2011). When asked if it was easy to meet people at the Falls, Julio (interview ten 2011) replied:

Yep, I think so. Everyone seems pretty happy. You can kind of just tell if someone’s got a smile on their face then they’re happy to talk to ya.

But Julio makes another interesting point when she adds:

I pick people who are sitting by themselves and like “Are you alright?”, you know, “Is everything alright?”, “Do you want someone to sit with you?” and stuff like that.

Vanessa (interview four 2011) expands on this point suggesting that perhaps the Falls “sort of amplifies your personality down here. Like I’m quite open to just chatting to anyone, you know, any day but down here I can sort of get away with it”.

### **5.3.3 Making Friends**

The data suggest that the Falls spatial structure and characteristics facilitate interaction. Many participants in the qualitative components of the research comment on the ease of meeting people particularly around the tent sites creating a kind of neighbourhood or community. There is also evidence that the ease of interaction allows them to be more forthcoming – starting up conversations. All this

seems to be a sub-theme to making friends. This section is important in facilitating the meeting of people. However, it seems that there is more to it and that an array of friendships and interactions occur. Several types of social interactions are being forged.

### **Re-Meeting Old Friends**

The Falls is a meeting place for some people not only to meet new people but also to, as Jimmy (focus group eleven 2010) found, “run into people I haven’t seen for a long time”. While less than half of the attendees interviewed in the 2011 survey use the Falls for meeting (Q6 2011), sixty-five percent did state that they do catch up with old friends at the Falls (Q8 2011). This was also evident when looking at the motivations to catch up with friends (Q7 2010) and to bond with close friends (Q7 2010). Ninety percent of respondents are on the motivated spectrum when asked if they wish to catch up with friends at the Falls and eighty-five percent are on the same spectrum when asked if they wished to bond with close friends. They may not plan to use the space for meeting specifically but it appears that there exists a level of expectation that they can meet up with people.

The Falls presented opportunities for re-bonding with existing friends. Walter (focus group eight 2010) says the Falls for him was to “just to catch up with people you haven’t seen in ages too, like. I met people I haven’t seen in like two or three years”. The Falls was also a valuable opportunity for others to bond with friends: “They’re a lot of my mates from the skate park” (Max – focus group fourteen 2010) and “[I am here] just to have a bit of fun and see some friends” (Charmaine – focus group fourteen 2010). Shannon (focus group nine 2010) found that “everyone I was expecting to be here I have already bumped into” and others used it as an opportunity to catch up with friends from school days. Edmund (interview one 2011) explained: “my friends are the ones that organised it [the trip to the Falls] and I was fine because I went to school with them and then I moved away so it’s a great opportunity to chat up”.

The Falls presented opportunities for re-meeting and re-engaging with people that attendees had not seen for a while. Some attendees commented on how they bumped into people they had not seen for a long time and that these interactions had not been planned. Genevieve (focus group eleven 2010) provides an example of a chance interaction:

I ran into some friends as soon as we parked the car. I noticed a friend only a few metres away just putting up his tent. That’s happened a couple of times as well. You sit down and then you look over and you see someone you haven’t seen for a long time ... We were sitting right next to each other over at the main stage and we haven’t seen each other since high school. It’s probably been fifteen years since we’ve seen each other and we ended up sitting next to each other at the Falls, which is pretty good ... They don’t live far away either from where I live so ... we swapped numbers and all that.

But there are other dimensions to meeting and making friends. One esurvey respondent (2010) points out the opportunity to re-meet in 2011: “After meeting a whole heap of melbourne’ers next to our camp site, we have all vowed to meet up next year at falls! Had an epic time!”. Yet another found that in catching up with old friends others are introduced into the circle:

We camped in a big group at Falls and friends who have moved away that we were catching up with also brought their friends. So we got to meet lots of people! As well as our neighbours in tent city.

### **Friends of Friends**

This theme of *friends of friends* emerges as a strong aspect of the way in which the Falls makes it easy to meet people and make friends. Numerous participants reported to have met people through friends of friends at both campsites and within the entertainment spaces. Meeting people through a friend of a friend was a social outcome of the meeting space. For example: “most of the group i visted with i didn't

know” (esurvey 2010). Almost sixty percent of respondents to the esurvey claimed that most of their friends were friends of each other (Q5 2010).

A conversation in focus group thirteen (2010) sheds more light on how this happens:

Gloria – I met all these guys [pointing at the members of the group] that I didn’t know

Jackie – Me and Gloria went to school together so it’s been more like an introduction to a lot of people I’ve met

John – It’s kinda like two groups which have, kinda over time not just at Falls, sort of started connecting

Gloria – Yeah and I came in a convoy with a lot of people I didn’t know as well ‘cause we went with our friend’s boyfriend and her friends so there’s heaps of people we’ve met for the first time as well

Others tell similar stories. Julio (interview ten 2011) recounted:

I came down with friends that I was invited with but I’m staying with people where I only know two people and there’s about twelve others there that I’ve just met while I’m here ... came with the new boyfriend ... and met all his friends, yeah ... I’ve made lots of new friends at our campsite who are friends of friends.

Another attendee from urban Victoria (Ocean Ranger – interview nine 2011) also experienced the friends of friends scenario:

[I met up with] friends and friends of friends and then friends of friends ... just kept extending. Then I bumped into some friends from Melbourne as well, so yeah, it’s good.

Paul (interview eleven 2011) offered a more detailed explanation:

[I]t’s more so the friends through friends from friends thing ... most of the people I have met here have been in that situation ... you go to their campsites and you’ve got mates there so you start talking to them and find out you’ve got a bit in common.

Further, the friends of friends dynamic unfolds in ad hoc and loose ways – around the base camp or even as the convoy of cars into the Falls assemblies. As one attendee (Bot – focus group eleven 2010) found:

[A] couple of ring-ins from interstate [mainland Australia]. Friends of friends ... This was base camp ... they knew we were coming to the Falls. We didn’t really know that there were gonna be any others. We didn’t know who was going to turn up really. We just said “This is where we’re going to be” and it all just fell together.

Or as recounted by Thor (focus group five 2010):

When we rocked up we said “oh, we’re in a convoy of 14 cars” and they just made us just line up until all our cars were there and let us all go through at the same time ... so we own all these 14 cars along here.

Terms like ‘extended groups’, ‘circle of friends’, ‘bunch of friends’ and ‘mutual friends’ were also used to describe variations of the friends of friends concept. The opportunity to link between groups was clearly evident in the data collected. For example:

I came along with a bunch of friends that aren’t really friends and came together with a completely different crew but I knew these guys [pointing at two other focus group members] so I spend a lot of time up here. (Murray – focus group thirteen 2010)

Met extended groups of my work mates friends who in turn i have caught up with since. (esurvey 2010)

Met people i vaguely knew at the festival, met their freind whom I had not met before continued see them and their freinds after Falls, and joined thier circle of freinds who are like minded as I. (esurvey 2010).

Friends of friends is a valuable social networking mechanism and the stories reveal a more nuanced picture. Importantly, there were integral social actors known as *Randoms* who can become *Falls Friends*. These terms are unpacked further in the following section.

### **Randoms and Falls Friends**

A *Random*<sup>43</sup>, a term coined by participants, was a person you might randomly meet at the Falls and was a potential friend. This was a good thing and they were not a ‘stranger’ per se. The term random was used often in the interviews for “random conversations” (Jane – interview eight 2011) and to meet “random people” (Brooklyn – focus group twelve 2010). Shannon (focus group nine 2010) offered further insight:

[A]fter you’ve been to a couple of these things too, and if you keep the same spot, like we’ve been doing the same thing every year, you just end up with all these people, Randoms, who come up and ... know where to find you straight away.

The *Randoms* (or *Random* singular) are contacts that could develop into what Falls participants in focus group interviews scoped as a *Falls Friend*<sup>44</sup>. The term Falls Friend was teased out with the focus groups in 2010 and then more directly with interviewees in 2011. These are friends who are only friends at the Falls (at least initially). Geraldine (focus group sixteen 2010) explained this transition:

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<sup>43</sup> Capitalisation added for emphasis: this is a particular type of ‘person’ to attendees.

<sup>44</sup> Capitalisation added for emphasis: this is a particular type of ‘person’ to attendees.

There’s a couple of people who ... I saw at Falls the first time I came and I saw them last time I came and I see them this time and I only see them when they come to Falls and they are my Falls Friends.

The data shows that it was very common for people to have friends who they met at the Falls and randomly bump into the following year and re-engage.

While only eighteen percent of 2011 attendees who participated in the survey claim to have friends who they only see at the Falls (Q7 2011) when this is cross-tabulated (see Table 2) with the number of Falls festivals attended (Q17 2011) there is a trending towards an increase in the number of Falls Friends. First year attendees tended to not have Falls Friends (82%) or were unsure of their Falls Friend status (8%) whereas those who had attended more than four times recognised that they had Falls Friends (37%).

		Number of Falls in Marion Bay attended					Total
		2011 is my first	Two	Three	Four	More Than Four	
I have friends that I only see at the Falls	Agree	30 (9.7%)	16 (17.3%)	15 (29.4%)	11 (37.9%)	26 (36.6%)	98
	Disagree	253 (81.9%)	72 (78.3%)	33 (64.7%)	18 (62.1%)	43 (60.6%)	419
	Unsure	26 (8.4%)	4 (4.3%)	3 (5.9%)	0 (0.0%)	2 (2.8%)	35
	Total	309	92	51	29	71	552

**Table 2 – Falls Friends vs Number of Attendances (Cross-tabulation)**

Fifty-two percent also acknowledged that a person that they had met at the Falls in 2011 would more likely be only a Falls Friend (Q2b 2011).

A Falls Friend seemed to be the next level of connectedness after a Random albeit often only for the duration of the Festival. Respondents cast this in a number of ways: “just a Falls fling ... but being Tasmanian we’ll probably see each other again anyway” (Craig – focus group seven 2010); and “a temporary friend but it’s a nice



thing to do” (Sarah – interview four 2011). Mary (interview eight 2011) confirmed that a Falls Friend “definitely exists” while others qualified this by saying: “They are a low-maintenance friend” (Sarah – interview four 2011).

All this confirms that it is relatively easy for most people to meet other people at the Falls and that it is also relatively easy to make a Falls Friend. There was also evidence that some attendees hoped that their Falls Friend would continue to be a Falls Friend at future events. For example: “You’re more inclined to say ‘Are you going to Falls next time? I’ll be there. See you there’” (Bear – focus group eight 2010). This seems to be something that occurs across the festival circuit as Fox (interview five 2011) explained:

I’ve actually experienced that [a Falls Friend] at other festivals ... when we used to go to Glastonbury [Festival] we used to always camp near a big tent group called the ‘Taunton Posse’. They used to put a banner and they were like, “hey, it’s the ‘Taunton Posse hive’” ... it’s something that does happen at other festivals.

But equally there is a regularity of seeing and running into the same people as Mary (interview eight 2011) relates: “you keep running into the same people”.

## **5.4 Theme Three: Impact of Time**

The Falls was a tradition for some, more so than the music: the Falls can be “a tradition amongst my friends and that will continue for many years!” (esurvey 2010). For one respondent to the 2011 survey the Falls was very special as their “son was conceived here in 2006. We have brought him here for the past 6 years and our 15mth old daughter has been twice. This is our 9<sup>th</sup> year – it is a family tradition – Falls is an institution!”

A key finding in the data points to the role of time in strengthening relationships and in fostering social ties. What appeared to be special for many participants in this

research was the opportunity provided by the Falls to take the time to collectively bond with both old and new friends. This was not just an event to say “hello” but one which afforded the opportunity to invest the time to strengthen those relationships. In this theme the ways in which this happened are examined.

#### ***5.4.1 Spending Time in Space***

Sarah (interview four 2011) explained that the opportunity to bond was simply a case of having time to meet people:

Thinking of those people that we did meet, we weren’t drinking at the time ... just having a chat. I think it’s more, just, there’s no time constraints now you know. I don’t have to be anywhere. I don’t have my job to go to or work that I should be doing so there’s nothing else happening ... It’s much easier to spend time talking to people down here now.

Being able to spend time at the Falls to build relationships was important to many participants in the study. One survey respondent (2011) stressed that they had “strengthened many friendships here by attending” while an esurvey (2010) respondent declared that they had become “closer with a few friends who were merely acquaintances”. The data suggests a number of ways in which time was important: time to enjoy the festival experience, time to appreciate the location, time to socialise, time to unwind and time to “chill”. Moreover it seems that the ability to camp at the Falls facilitated this time factor. Seventy-eight percent of respondents to the 2011 survey claimed that camping was important to them (Q11 2011). Paul (interview eleven 2011) argued that a camping festival enabled much more than just a chill out and was different from a one-day festival:

[Y]ou come down to camp by the sea for a couple of days it sort of lets you unwind a bit more whereas you go to the festival ... say in Melbourne or whatever in a built up city ... you’re still in that life style ... Like all the street noise and all that sort of stuff ... but you come down here and ... there’s no buildings, there’s nothing like that. It’s just the bush.

The camping aspect of the Falls appeared to be an enabler for social interaction. Stephanie (interview seven 2011) attempted to describe the difference between a one-day and three-day festival suggesting that “probably the main difference is, like, the camping aspect and, like, obviously we’ve chatted to our neighbours either side and made that sort of connection”. The value of a camping festival versus a one-day festival was explored in the follow up survey in 2011. Only three percent of respondents to the 2011 survey disagreed that three-day festivals were both better and more social than one-day festivals (Q11 2011). The comments that supported this data stress things such as “you go to them [one day festivals] for the music ... you come here to chill” (Amy – focus group thirteen 2010).

Generally the feeling of participants was that a three-day festival was different from a one-day festival. A three-day festival was “better than the usual hustle bustle of the *Big Day Out*” (Jane – interview eight 2011). For example, this respondent continued: “Yesterday we were kind of sitting back and watching all the bands and today you’re kind of stopping around chatting to people”. Participants were often able to take the time to ‘chill’ with their friends at the campsite and at the same time embrace the organised entertainment. It seems you can have the best of both as Aaron (2010) relates: “You come down here [tent-site]. You kick back. Have a couple of drinks. You head up top [to the Main Arena]. You come back down [to the campsite].” Ocean Ranger (interview 9, 2011) agreed stating, “Everyone goes down there to campsites and chill out and have some food and drinks and that sort of stuff and come up and ... watch the artist that they enjoy most or whatever”. As one participant observed, “everyone’s pacing themselves differently” on day three of the Falls compared to days one and two (Bear – focus group 8, 2010).

### **5.4.2 From Music to Social**

In the discussions the themes around the ease of meeting people and the camaraderie of the campsites have been evident. Indeed it seems that for some the Falls was predominantly about socialising. Respondents reflected on this in various ways: for some it's “a fantastic festival and I really see it as a time to hang out and catch up with friends!” (esurvey 2010) while others like Julio (interview ten, 2011) found:

So far it's [the Falls] just been catching up with people. Some of them I haven't seen for years, some of them just 'cause they live in Hobart ... catching up with people I haven't seen for a while. Not really into the music. I'll get there if I get there. I'm not too fussed. So yeah, more just hanging out with friends.

It seems that time may reinforce this aspect of the Falls experience. For example Jackie (focus group thirteen 2010) observed:

This year it has been a lot of campsite action instead of previous years where it's been running back and forth checking the sets and making sure you're there. It's been a lot more relaxed. We've been playing card games and just sort of chilling and just socialising more, you know, than sort of running off to be in a mosh pit.

Others found a similar pattern. From the participant in the survey (2011) who said “Falls was more social for me this time. Last time I saw lots of bands. This time I enjoyed the vibe and took time to be more social. I enjoy camping so that I can do this” and Stephanie (interview seven 2011) who offered a similar example:

I wouldn't say it changes; I would just probably say strengthens. Like maybe strengthens those Falls Friends ... and just the laid back and relaxed feel of it.

Jackie (focus group thirteen 2010) elaborated on the strengthening of social connections stating, “previously I’ve come just for the music and this year I’ve come for mostly friends so it’s a bit of a comparison ... this year it’s been a bit more relaxed ... a bit more social”. Her fellow focus group participants responded with “I always love it. I have a good time. Yeah, a little bit of the interaction and a bit of the music. A bit of a mix. I like it”; “definitely the friends ... there’s definitely always people here. You bump into so many people. It’s Tassie”; “all your friends are in the same area and there’s music and there’s entertainment”; and “just the social factor really”.

### ***5.4.3 Re-Meeting Post-Falls***

Of particular relevance to the discussion on social capital is the various friend experiences. Randoms, Falls Friends and friends of friends can extend beyond the duration of the Falls. Some participants advised that they took the time to extend their bonds and arranged to re-meet following their attendance at the Falls.

Thirty percent of respondents to the esurvey conducted post the 2010 Falls had taken the time while at the Falls to plan another time to meet their Falls Friends and twenty-four percent had made arrangements since attending the Falls (Q10 2010). The shared experience of attending the Falls fostered friendships that extended or enhanced shared experiences. This, in turn, furthered the building of social networks. Examples of this kind of extended social networking include:

Met a great guy who i then went on to visit at his place in a different state - thanks falls :).

We met a Canadian guy, who we became good friends with quickly, and after falls we went and stayed at his place in Hobart and then we all went camping together for a few days!

## Chapter Five – “There’s Some Good Random Stuff”: Analysing the Data

[A]ll the campsites around me, all of about 7 -10 people, all became one big campsite, I have since Falls been in contact with well over a dozen of the camp mates.

Made friends with the people next to our campsite at Falls. Stayed in touch since and have caught up several times.

[A]s a group we ended up travelling around tassie with another group who set up camp next to us, after sitting down for a drink and a game of cricket on the first afternoon we are now friends and chat on face book regularly, we have invited them to stay anytime they are visiting our way, (byron bay) area.

There were indications in the focus group sessions that if the Falls were replicated in some form or another and/or more events like the Falls were conducted there would be more repeated social interactions. Shannon (focus group nine 2010) alluded to this:

[P]eople that I have met at the festival are the sort of people that seem to hang around in the same kind of circles anyway so you ... tend to run into them every now and again at the same gigs or events.

Similar stories to that of Shannon emerged in the 2010 esurvey where there was evidence of people meeting up again at similar events. Examples of these include “catching up with my Falls' neighbours at the Byron Bay Blues festival over Easter (they're from Perth & I'm in Melbourne)” and “made a new friend at Falls – have caught up again since at Circus Fest!” Vanessa (interview four 2011) suggested that there exists a culture of festival goers who are likely to meet again in that there are “lots of, you know, pretty chilled out dudes who just sort of float about and sort of get the feeling that they just move from festival to festival during the year”.

## **5.5 Theme Four: Norms, Trust and Social Rules**

The coalescence of place, accessibility and size along with easily met friends and time to “chill out” at both the music events and at the campsite creates what is sometimes referred to as the Falls community. Numerous attendees acknowledged this; for example: “There’s definitely a community going on here and we do feel part of it” (Jane – interview eight 2011). With a sense of community comes a range of social qualities such as norms.

### ***5.5.1 Escaping Norms***

The expression of norms is reflected in the Falls community through both presence and absence. The Falls fosters and enables a feeling of escape from wider society. Many participants expressed a desire to get away from both the hustle and bustle of day-to-day life and from the usual norms of their own communities outside of the Falls. Seventy-nine percent of respondents to the 2010 survey claimed to be on the motivated spectrum when asked about their level of motivation to attend the Falls to get away from day-to-day life (Q7 2010). As Jerry (focus group sixteen 2010) stated, “You don’t have to worry about life for three days so that’s why we come”.

Others like Shawshank (interview one 2011) felt the same:

I think it’s a way of escaping reality in the sense that we’ve trekked ... over 1,500 kilometres nearly to get here and it’s just an escape from the usual and, umm, it’s a good escape. It’s relaxed. We’re seeing our favourite bands and be with our friends.

As did Vanessa (interview four 2011):

I suppose it’s a great chance to let your hair down and have a heap of fun with your friends ... there’s no better way to celebrate the New Year I don’t think.

The Falls was “a good chance to just leave Melbourne and just get away from everything” (Ocean Ranger – interview nine 2011). It was a stress release as “you’ve built up a fair bit of steam over the last twelve months. Just get it off your chest and get away from it all”. Time at the Falls was a break from the usual routines and Brooklyn seemed relieved for the break as “it’s kinda nice [not having phone reception]. I have no idea what’s happening back home and I don’t care.”

Some attendees made reference to the Falls community being different from the broader community outside of the Falls. For some like Ebenezer (focus group sixteen 2010) it was about help offered:

I was setting me tent up in the dark ... yeah this guy randomly came out of nowhere and said “Do you want me to hold your light for you while you do that?” I was like ‘cool’. Atmosphere. Nice blokes ... It would not happen in [town name removed]<sup>45</sup> where I live. It wouldn’t happen ... I wouldn’t let someone hold my phone in [town name removed]. It’s a good atmosphere. I love it.

While for some (Paul and Sarah – interviews eleven and four 2011 respectively) it was about the composition of the community:

[I]n society it’s sort of pretty similar groups get about like social groups. I think we’ve got a pretty broad sort of spectrum ... there are all types of people and all types of little communities in one I suppose here.

And,

[A]lmost like as soon as you get in the gates and you see everyone walking around you know they’re here, you know, you’re at Falls ... I guess I definitely feel a part of it mainly because we’ve been coming for so long and ... we feel so comfortable down here ... whereas that might not be the case if you were anywhere else.

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<sup>45</sup> The name of the town is removed to protect the anonymity of the participant.



An esurvey participant in 2010 intimated that “being at the Falls Festival feels like being in a blissful hippy commune. Everyone seems pretty happy, and I think people have a stronger sense of community while they're there.”

Interestingly, however, the participants may have reported to have ‘escaped’ from wider society, including its norms, but, in reality, they had entered another community with its own norms.

### ***5.5.2 Norms of the Falls***

#### **Tolerance and Respect**

Feeling OK, or safe, to ‘be yourself’ was a recurring theme in the 2010 focus groups and the 2011 interviews. Participants expressed this by saying: “you can, actually, be yourself” (Jane – interview eight 2011) and “what everyone’s been saying today is that ‘we’re at Falls so who cares?’” (Barbara – focus group four 2010). Only three percent of respondents to the 2011 survey felt that they did not feel OK to be themselves at the Falls (Q9 2011).

It was also evident that the significant majority of participants in the 2010 esurvey also respected other people’s right to feel safe or to be who they are. One esurvey respondent (2010) identified that they had “found most people to be friendly and respectful of others”.

Ninety-two percent of respondents to the 2010 esurvey were on the agree spectrum when asked to respond to the statement of ‘Most people are tolerant at the Falls’ (Q8 2010). This sentiment is summed up by Shawshank and Edmund (interview one 2011) when explaining the type of people who come to the Falls:

I think like-minded people do. I mean you have to be obviously very open minded and culturally aware and to come here you can’t be closed-minded stuck to the whole, you know, day to day system of it all.

And,

Yeah I think there’s a mix of people here ... there’s people from everywhere you know ... Yeah I reckon open minded people as well.

Not only was there evidence of what one should do but there was evidence in the data of a culture, or norm, of what one should not do. These were unwritten social rules and further evidence of behaviour modification to the Falls community attitudes. One of these, interestingly, was that one does not complain. There were examples of people not wanting to complain about things of inconvenience at the Falls such as the quality of the toilets, the price of food and drink and the distance needed to be travelled around the Festival site. As Mark (focus group six 2010) said, “you don’t want to whinge about it [wheelchair access] though. It’s a festival.”

Respect also related to anti-social behaviour. According to some attendees there exists a level of anti-social behaviour that was not tolerated and/or respected at the Falls. This sentiment was generally enforced through collective behaviour and attitude. As Shawshank (interview one 2011) advised, “Everyone’s here to have a good time with no shit going on”. This was evidenced in some attendees’ reflections on their own behaviour while at the Falls. Von (focus group sixteen 2010) advised that “everyone’s here to have a good time. No-one wants to be a cockhead.” As, similarly, did Paul (interview eleven 2011) with “I don’t ... act the fool a bit I suppose”.

A survey respondent (2011) from New South Wales seemed disappointed with some of the ‘mucking up’ but was positive that the general populous always wins out in the end:

Falls – Great Festival – best in Australia, although more wankers seem to turn up each year which try to ruin the vibes, although people power will always overrun these type of people.

The reinforced behaviour was also reflected in those who, in other circumstances, may have retaliated. Dirk (focus group fifteen 2010) was expressive in his claim that “seriously, you come to Falls to have a fun time. Don’t fuck it up for everyone.” When probed further,

You get pretentious big-egoed pricks who come here who wanna start fights. “No fuck off. I just wanna chill with my mates” ... On the streets and stuff “I’ve never met you, I don’t know who you are, I just wanna crack you in the face”.

However, not only was there tolerance of and respect for their fellow attendees, there was also respect for the natural surroundings. As a 2010 esurvey respondent stated, the Falls has “made me more environmentally friendly and socially aware”. Eighty-two percent of respondents to the esurvey agreed or strongly agreed when responding to the statement ‘I recycle rubbish at the Falls Music & Arts Festival on a daily basis’ (Q8 2010). Given the strong emphasis on being an environmentally conscious festival, attendees of the Falls appear to feed off this vibe and encourage their fellow attendees to do the same. A reinforcement of this observation was in regard to “what you should do” – “we were very conscience of the rubbish left behind by others and cleaned up our campsite (because thats what you should do)” (esurvey 2010).

There was a level of respect for the efforts of the event organisers for creating this leadership – “green festivals are awesome” (survey 2011); “thank you ... for improving the care given to the environment!” (esurvey 2010); and “great environmental focus” (survey 2011).

Figure 15 is an example of the environmental initiatives of the organisers. Numerous respondents commented on how clean the Falls site was – “I think it’s a clean festival not too much rubbish around. The toilets are quite pleasant” (Fox – interview five 2011); “the cleanest fest I’ve ever been to” (survey 2011); and “so amazing clean to other festivals” (survey 2011) were just three examples of this. The message of being environmentally conscious had one survey respondent (2011) believing that the Falls was improving in this regard too. They reported that they were “amazed by how clean the festival has been this year”.



**Figure 15 – A Cigarette ‘Butt Out!’ Station<sup>46</sup>**

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<sup>46</sup> Photograph taken by the researcher and used with the permission of Ashlorien Management Pty Ltd.

## Reciprocity

In an overwhelming response, ninety-eight percent of respondents to the survey believed that they would help people at the Falls (Q10 2011).

The actioning of the norm of reciprocity was clearly evident in the qualitative components of this study in what one 2010 esurvey participant described as “random acts of kindness”. Examples of people helping with car troubles, recovering lost wallets and keys, offering sunscreen, assisting intoxicated people, putting up tents and helping injured people were prevalent in this case study.

Some examples of these random acts were as simple as “I read their [neighbour’s] paper yesterday” (Mark – focus group six 2010); “strangers give us lollies” (Jane – interview eight 2011); and “we got given Tiny Teddys this morning” (Mary – interview eight 2011).<sup>47</sup> Karen (focus group six 2010) and Annabelle (focus group twelve 2010) experienced assistance with their vehicles: “we locked our keys in the car first night and the fellas over there helped out” (Karen) and “the people over the back [helped] when we had to break into our car ‘cause we locked our keys in the car” (Annabelle). Ebenezer (focus group sixteen 2010) was surprised to experience a similar thing when he and his friends “walked in and these blokes asked us ... whether we were struggling and they carried our bags all the way to our tents”.

Others like Geraldine (focus group sixteen 2010) offered other quite substantial examples:

Everyone’s like real stoked and they’re not angry ... they’re real friendly. Like the first year I came here I lost my wallet and I had like a heap of money in it and someone handed it in with all the money and it’s just like that’s the type of people who come here.

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<sup>47</sup> Tiny Teddys are a brand of biscuit made by Arnott’s Biscuits Limited – see [www.arnotts.com.au/our-products/products/arnotts-tiny-teddy.aspx](http://www.arnotts.com.au/our-products/products/arnotts-tiny-teddy.aspx).

A similar experience occurred for a 2010 esurvey respondent:

I did have a guy come to my house about 2 weeks after the festival – he returned my license that I lost while dancing on NYE. He came and gave it to me and left. No idea his name but had a small chat at the door step and thanked him – thought that was really sweet that he came out of his way to drop it off – saved me getting a new one! THANK YOU mystery stranger.

An esurvey respondent (2010) had found that random acts of kindness had facilitated the meeting of new people:

I was in the mosh pit with some friends and they left so I was there on my own because I wanted to see Dan Sultan [performing artist at the Falls] and these two sisters started chatting away to me and offering sunscreen and I even met up with them again that night.

Helping people in moments of need appeared important to some, especially when it came to health issues. Dan (focus group fifteen 2010) went to great lengths to report that “a guy had a seizure there [pointing to a spot on the ground] and we were the first on the scene”. Frankie (interview six 2011) observed that “everyone is pretty friendly towards each other and looks out for each other” and that people take you “under their wing”. An esurvey respondent (2010) put it simply – “Thank you for the care of the people like us who go there”.

### **5.5.3 Trust**

People generally felt safe while at the Falls and held levels of trust in their fellow campers. Three statements in the 2010 esurvey were proposed for participants to respond to that were designed to elucidate levels of trust. The first statement in the 2010 esurvey to respond to was ‘I feel safe walking alone at the Falls’ (Q8 2010). Eighty percent of respondents either agreed or strongly agreed with this statement with a further twelve percent slightly agreeing. Fifty-six percent of respondents

either agreed or strongly agreed with the statement ‘Most people can be trusted at the Falls’ (Q8 2010) with a further twenty-three percent slightly agreeing. Fifty-eight percent of respondents either agreed or strongly agreed that they would invite their neighbour over to their campsite (Q8 2010) with a further twenty-two percent slightly agreeing.

As discussed earlier seventy-seven percent of respondents to the 2010 esurvey (Q10 2010) and seventy-nine percent to the 2011 survey (Q2 2011) indicated that they had met someone at the Falls. Of the seventy-nine percent in 2011 who claimed to have met someone, seventy-seven percent of those respondents agreed that they felt safe to invite that person to their campsite (Q2e 2011).

A survey respondent (2011) enunciated that they “feel very safe at Falls”. Julio (interview ten 2011), as a younger female attendee, described her feeling of safety:

I was a bit worried about it [the size of the Falls] before I came. I didn’t know how I’d go with that many people but I’m happy to wander around on my own and to get to where I need to be and just say “Hey!” to people that I don’t know ... seems pretty safe. Like, everyone’s got their own space but then you can gather when you want to as well.

According to some respondents, the Falls was a “safe environment for young people” (survey 2011) as it was a “tremendous opportunity for many younger people to ‘party and celebrate’ in a relatively safe and bounded environment” (esurvey 2010). Another esurvey respondent (2010) argued that “its an amazing place to make friends and see music, i think its a really responsible and good way for young people to spend their new years!”

This level of safety also appeared to encourage some families to attend. Three survey respondents (2011) explained that “we bought our 4 children (12, 10, 8, 6). Great fun safe place, crowd excellent with kids. Thanks!”; “love the place for me and

my family”; and “brought to<sup>48</sup> kids and was relieved at how family friendly it is” respectively. Vanessa (interview four 2011) was surprised at “the amount of families that come down” and an esurvey respondent (2010) “loved the family friendly nature of the event”.

#### ***5.5.4 Alternative Perceptions of the Community***

Other perspectives on the Falls community were offered. There were indications of alternative cultural and generational barriers and perceptions. Some felt that there were diversions in the community and others felt isolated. The majority of these comments were made by people who were attending the Falls for the first time.

As one participant observed: “there are random people who come here just to drink that don’t actually enjoy the Festival” (Boris – focus group five 2010). Not all younger people were there for the music vibe. Reflecting on early focus group interviews, an entry from the researcher’s festival audio-diary in 2010 noted:

[I]t seems to be the younger ones that socialise in the groups around their campsites. It’s interesting because there’s quite a lot who haven’t even visited, or don’t appear to have visited, the main part of the Falls. They all seem to be hanging around their little campsites. So they’ve actually used this [the Falls] as a meeting place to have some fun I guess.

In the focus groups, the researcher observed generational differences within the festival experience. Older attendees appeared to spend more time in the Main Arena whereas the younger attendees who participated in the focus groups appeared to spend a considerable amount of time in their campsites. One of the older participants observed that the younger people were there to “hang out with friends” (Audrey – focus group sixteen 2010). Others pointed out some issues around age. As Walter (focus group eight 2010) observed:

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<sup>48</sup> two.



It’s the 16s. They’re more annoying ... I think it could be an over 18 event pretty comfortably as long as they sell all the tickets ... probably be a lot better vibe even. Less young people runnin’ around pretty smashed.

Interestingly, not one younger person in an interview or focus group complained about the attendance of ‘older’ people.

Stephanie (interview seven 2011) felt the opposite of Walter:

There’s, umm, a few people that, you know, that you’d rather them not be here but, generally, I’m really surprised to see the amount of families and kids that are here, umm, and also, like, underage, so I think that’s really cool. So, a lot of the festivals in Brisbane that I’ve gone to have become 18+ so, like, they can’t do that anymore. So that’s pretty cool.

It was not all negative though. Some of the older attendees found the Falls to be an enlightening experience to better understand other cultures. For example, “I thought it would be more X generational but it did enhance my view of the younger generation” (survey 2011). Lola (focus group seventeen 2010), a seasoned overseas traveller, was positive on the Falls as a chance to expose young people to different experiences: “This is a great experience for those who haven’t travelled. It’s not so homogenous.”

Another recurring theme was the dislike for “bogans”<sup>49</sup>, “tools”<sup>50</sup> and the like. Despite the strong focus on and interest in community, some participants expressed a reluctance to visit the so-called ‘Red Zone’ in tent city. The Red Zone is an enclave where bogans, tools and the like arguably congregate. Yet despite these concerns others were accepting of the existence of other sub-cultures as this was all part of a

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<sup>49</sup> The term *bogan* is a derogatory, slang term when used in this context (Bogan.com.au, 2013).

<sup>50</sup> The term *tool* is a derogatory, slang term when used in this context (Urban Dictionary, 2014).

festival in that “you get the normal, like, what I call tools, that are only out to sort of like, you know, drink and do other things” (Stephanie – interview seven 2011).

A number of sub-cultures were identified. Another group under scrutiny were those “trying to be cool”. Julio’s (interview ten 2011) description explains:

[T]here’s your little kids who get dressed up for a fashion parade and wear bathers as clothes and then there’s the ones who are just here for the music and are in the mosh 24/7 and then, I guess, kind of like me and my friends just here to hang out and have a bit of fun.

The data shows that the Falls, as a three-day event, creates a sense of community for some. Within that community participants see an opportunity to relax and just be. Yet despite the sense of freedom there are nevertheless a set of norms and codes which frame the activities and behaviours. There are those who challenge these norms but nevertheless there is a sense of harmony and tolerance for diversity.

## **5.6 Theme Five: Communication**

An important feature of the Falls was how people communicated. This theme examines the role of technology on site and in linking across time and space between Falls events. It assists to determine the role technology plays in building and/or strengthening social ties. Technology appears to add another layer to the space – a virtual layer.

The level of integration of technology into attendees’ lives for social networking was something anticipated but nevertheless the value placed on technology by attendees at the Falls came as a surprise. This theme analyses the participants’ use of social media and ubiquitous technologies in relation to communicating with friends, Falls Friends and others. The use of technology to strengthen bonds was important to

most participants and forms part of this discussion as does the significant impact of a near ubiquitous technology blackout<sup>51</sup> during the Falls event in 2010 for patrons.

### 5.6.1 *Communicating in Daily Life*

A question was asked on the 2010 esurvey to gauge the level of contact that people had with others in daily life using technology (Q9 2010 – see Table 3). While ninety percent of respondents claimed to converse face-to-face on a daily basis, using a mobile phone for text messaging (79%), social media (59%) and email (55%) were the next three highest daily communication methods. In contrast, mailing/faxing and the use of a home landline phone ranked very low for daily use at ten percent and eight percent respectively. The use of landlines, postage mail, facsimiles and early forms of web2.0 communications such as online instant messaging, web forums and chat rooms rated very low on usage on all questions relating to communication platforms.

	Never	Almost Never	Sometimes	Almost Daily	Daily
Face-to-face (n=351)	1 (0.3%)	2(0.9%)	10 (2.8%)	23 (6.6%)	315 (89.7%)
Mail/fax (n=349)	28 (8.0%)	136 (39.0%)	122 (35.0%)	29 (9.7%)	34 (9.7%)
Home phone (calling) (n=347)	83 (23.9%)	87 (25.1%)	110 (31.7%)	39 (11.2%)	28 (8.1%)
Mobile phone (calling) (n=353)	1 (0.3%)	15 (4.5%)	83 (23.5%)	95 (26.9%)	159 (45.0%)
Mobile phone (texting) (n=354)	1 (0.3%)	2 (0.5%)	22 (6.2%)	49 (13.8%)	280 (79.1%)
Email (n=353)	3 (0.8%)	15 (4.2%)	69 (19.5%)	72 (20.4%)	194 (55%)
Social media (n=354)	24 (6.8%)	11 (3.1%)	41 (11.6%)	68 (19.2%)	210 (59.3%)
Instant messaging (n=352)	168 (47.7%)	83 (23.6%)	63 (17.9%)	16 (4.5%)	22 (6.3%)
Chatrooms (n=353)	275 (77.9%)	60 (17.0%)	13 (3.7%)	0 (0.0%)	5 (1.4%)
Website forums (n=353)	165 (46.7%)	104 (29.5%)	60 (17.0%)	11 (3.1%)	13 (3.7%)
Video conferencing (n=346)	126 (36.4%)	98 (28.3%)	99 (28.6%)	11 (3.2%)	12 (3.5%)

**Table 3 – My level of contact with people (Q9 2010)**

A similar question was asked on the 2011 survey but it had a specific technology focus to gain deeper insight into the technology findings from the 2010 study. There was high usage of social technologies on a daily basis by attendees at the Falls in

<sup>51</sup> Very limited charging facilities and telecommunications network coverage available to patrons.

their day-to-day lives (Q12 2011). Texting on a mobile phone (92%) came through as the number one technological communication tool utilised on a daily basis. Social media (82%) came through at number two. These results were reflected in the 2010 focus group discussions when asked how they communicated with each other.

### ***5.6.2 Communicating at the Falls***

In the 2010 focus groups, participants were asked to identify how they communicated with other attendees while they were at the Falls. Most participants reported that they liked to communicate by mobile phone, predominantly through short message service (SMS) platforms indicating they do this because “I can say ‘I will be here at this point at this time or I’m here now’. Calling I find harder because sometimes you can’t hear what they’re saying” (Bear – focus group eight 2010).

In analysing the focus group data from 2010, there was a strong indication of a dependence on technology for communication. The dependence was especially the case when discussing the lack of ability to utilise ubiquitous technologies at the Falls. Mobile phone signals were only received by Telstra customers.<sup>52</sup> The technology ‘blackout’ at the Falls, especially for younger people, significantly ‘disabled’ learned communication methods. Some attendees like Dirk (focus group fifteen 2010) appreciated the addition of a Telstra tower in that it’s “great that they boosted the signal and we noticed that on the service it says ‘Falls Festival’ ‘cause where they boosted it. It actually tells you where you are.” Although the effort by the organisers to implement this initiative was appreciated by some, it was of little or no value to attendees if they had their phone sim card registered with another telecommunications carrier. This was particularly a barrier for mainland attendees<sup>53</sup> as they had increased access to an array of phone carriers with none of these supported at the Falls. An example of this was from Chris (focus group twelve 2010), from urban New South Wales, in that he had “no phone reception. With

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<sup>52</sup> Telstra installed a temporary transmission tower at the 2010 event.

<sup>53</sup> 41% of respondents to the 2010 esurvey were from mainland Australia or overseas (Q22 2010).

[telecommunications company name removed] it’s rubbish. I haven’t even bothered charging my phone.”

De-charged phones was another recurring theme in focus group interviews in 2010 as something of an issue at the Falls as a barrier to communication. Attendees could not recharge their mobile phones at the Falls unless they had an in-car charger or a back-up battery system. Craig (focus group seven 2010) believed that phone charging “is a real problem here. Because your phone is a tool of keeping in touch with people and then, you know, it goes flat and you have to rely on other means, which is sometimes hard when there’s 16,000 people here”. Similar statements were made by Geraldine (focus group sixteen 2010) and Dirk (focus group fifteen 2010) when they revealed that “everyone’s phones are flat” and “my phone’s gone flat now” respectively. The absence of power-points meant that participants’ mobile phones could not be charged via wired electricity connection. It was suggested that the Falls “needs more ... phone chargers” (survey 2011). It was suggested by one participant that this may have been a business opportunity for an electricity supplier.

Conversely, Walter (focus group eight 2010) stated that he did not want to use his phone at the Falls – “I’d prefer not to take my phone because I don’t like carrying it around”. The problem for Walter was that his camping friends did want to use theirs – “If we had phones we’d be texting you [Walter] asking where you guys were ... we lost you for like four hours last night” (Bear); because communication is “really difficult without a phone” (Ginger). Like Bear, Fekisha (focus group fourteen 2010) also wanted to use her phone because “If my phone worked I’d be calling people all the time”.

This issue left people like Thor (focus group five 2010) thinking about how they might communicate with each other – “Charging is a problem ... You run out of batteries so you’ve really gotta find out where everybody is”. Bear (focus group eight 2010), the person who could not find Walter and his friends for four hours, stated, “I think if we

could find other forms of communication that would be good. It’s hard without phones.”

Some participants had planned ahead how they would communicate with each other. As discussed in theme two, some people had simply made a meeting point at their camp site or in the entertainment areas as their best way to maintain communication. Another form of communication was the use of costuming. This was not too dissimilar to what might be witnessed in the grandstands at a sports match but it was an innovative and vibe-enhancing measure nonetheless (see Figures 16 and 17 for examples).



**Figure 16 – Crayons**  
**(Source: Falls Music and Arts Festival, 2012a)<sup>54</sup>**

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<sup>54</sup> Photograph used with the permission of Ashlorien Management Pty Ltd.



**Figure 17 – Mario Bros**  
**(Source: Falls Music and Arts Festival, 2012b)<sup>55</sup>**

### ***5.6.3 Communicating Post-Falls***

From an examination of the 2010 focus group data, mobile phones were the most common mechanism for collecting contact details of people who were ‘bumped into’. No phone signal or ability to charge phones meant limited ability to collect numbers. Fekeisha (focus group fourteen 2010) experienced this “because we don’t have phones here ... I can’t give them my number so ... ‘I’ve got you on Facebook so I’ll message you later’”. It was an asset to Fekeisha that she utilised the communication tools of Facebook. The ability to source and/or tap into networks on social media appeared to play a big role in strengthening bonds.

Ninety-six percent of respondents to the 2010 esurvey claimed to have communicated with people that they had met at the Falls in the approximately two months post-Falls (Q12 2010). In asking how they had communicated with people that they already knew before the Falls, respondents communicated predominantly

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<sup>55</sup> Photograph used with the permission of Ashlorien Management Pty Ltd.

through face-to-face communications (83%), mobile phone texting (78%), social media (69%) and mobile phone calling (68%) (Q13 2010 – see Table 4). These results were similar to the question discussed earlier relating to the forms of communication that were used on a daily basis (Q9 2010 – see Table 3).

Exploring more deeply, thirty-eight percent used social media, twenty-nine percent conversed face-to-face, twenty-six percent used mobile phone texting and eleven percent used mobile phone calling as the dominant forms of communication used to communicate with people who they had met at the Festival since the event (see Table 4). Although only eleven percent had conversed with six or more new friends (Q14 2010), the use of social media and mobile phone texting as the top forms of technology to do this offers an interesting insight into how people build new friendships in the twenty-first century.

	People I knew before The Falls	People I met at The Falls
Face-to-face	316 (82.9%)	112 (29.4%)
Mail/fax	26 (6.8%)	1 (0.3%)
Home phone (calling)	101 (26.5%)	4 (1.0%)
Mobile phone (calling)	260 (68.2%)	40 (10.5%)
Mobile phone (texting)	297 (78.0%)	99 (26.0%)
Email	192 (50.4%)	36 (9.4%)
Social media	262 (68.8%)	146 (38.3%)
Instant messaging	28 (7.3%)	12 (3.1%)
Chat rooms	8 (2.1%)	2 (0.5%)
Forums	15 (3.9%)	6 (1.6%)
Video conferencing	29 (7.6%)	6 (1.6%)

**Table 4 – I have communicated with people (Q13 2010)**

Facebook was specifically mentioned in eleven separate focus groups, Twitter once and MySpace once in relation to communication post-Falls. Facebook was mentioned in seven of the 2011 interviews and Google+, a relatively new social media platform at that time, was mentioned once. In an interview with Paul (interview eleven 2011), Facebook, as a key platform for continued social engagement between use of the space, was discussed:



Paul – Facebook is a big one ... you don’t talk to people, umm, say on Facebook. Like you wouldn’t ring somebody up that you talk to on Facebook or anything like that so, umm, so that’s certainly the ... best way of keeping acquaintances. Like to me an acquaintance is someone you can just talk to on Facebook and that sort of stuff but you wouldn’t give them a buzz ‘n say “How you going mate? Want to go out for tea or go to a movie or something?”, so yeah ... regardless of how well you know the person you can still sort of add them as a friend and then get to know them or whatever ... you’ve got a name ... especially if you don’t really know them that well ... one thing will lead to another there and everything expands then ... so it’s a pretty powerful source of media ... Last year I helped this bloke who got the piss beaten out of him and, umm, I actually met him again in here this year. I was talking to him on Facebook ... added him on Facebook and we had a beer here not long ago.

Researcher – But if it wasn’t for the Falls you wouldn’t have met up with him again?

Paul – That’s right, yeah.

Participants regularly pointed to using social media and text messaging as softer options for making friends and the ongoing servicing of the friendships. An example of this was “you can meet someone and, if you know their name, you could probably find them on Facebook, whereas texting you actually have to do the whole mobile number thing” (John – focus group thirteen 2010). James (focus group five 2010) continued this line of servicing new friendships when he said that “we’ll probably find out his [another attendee’s] last name and Facebook him and we’ll become friends on Facebook”. Jackie (focus group thirteen 2010) also advised, “On Facebook you can ‘like’ one of their [another attendee’s] photos or ‘like’ a comment. That’s, you know, social, whereas it’s not sort of making an effort.” Murray (focus group thirteen 2010) simply expressed that Facebook is “more casual. It’s just taken off.”

Walter (focus group eight 2010) described in more depth the ability to keep in touch through social media:

With the use of Facebook now it’s easier to do that [communicate with people you have met]. I met a few people here from College and football and stuff ... I’d probably even ask them to be my friend on Facebook ... I would [add them as a Facebook friend] ... it’s just that I haven’t seen them for five, six, seven years and ... it’s a really good chat, memories I suppose ... now it’s easy to catch up and keep in touch with people.

## 5.7 Theme Six: Health and Wellbeing

One of the aspects of social capital that is of particular interest to this research resides in the productive value added by social capital. Social capital research has consistently grappled with the issue of social capital and its connection to productivity. Sometimes this relationship is stated in economic terms. In this study the data is examined from a broader perspective looking at the social, health and economic wellbeing of attendees. Even though the Falls does constitute a community in the eyes of some participants (yet with relatively weak social structures – most likely attributable to the transitory nature of the event), there was evidence of productivity that often flowed beyond the festival event to a wider reach.

Many participants talked about information sharing. In the simplest it meant: “You bump into strangers but they’re also friendly here so you just learn their names and where they’re from. They share a bit of information” (Murray – focus group thirteen 2010) and “we were having a discussion and he [a neighbour] heard it and he had the answer so had a bit of a convo<sup>56</sup> about that” (Shannon – focus group nine 2010).

Responses to the 2010 esurvey (Q10 2010) shed a little more light showing that five percent of respondents found out about a potential job, eleven percent were asked to join or joined a group, twenty-one percent strengthened or learned a new skill, six

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<sup>56</sup> Conversation.

percent were inspired to undertake further study and fifteen percent became motivated on an issue or for a cause while attending the Falls. The figures indicate that there was also a longer term flow-on benefit from their social experiences at the Falls. There were numerous examples of these kinds of opportunities. One esurvey respondent in 2010 “became interested and got information on the AYAD program”.<sup>57</sup> Another respondent was “offered to join a band” and another “got better at playing gigs to a large crowd”. And yet another example (esurvey 2010):

I was inspired to learn more about being an audio person for a concert and also being the camera person for filming for the big screens on either side of the stage and have enrolled to do some courses at college in both subject areas.

Beyond the sharing of information and skills transfer, events such as the Falls foster social relationships. Not surprisingly personal relationships can be kindled at the Falls. These Falls relationships are often facilitated through friends of friends as an esurvey respondent outlined: “I have now become good friends with an acquaintance while at Falls, and I also met and am now in a relationship with his best friend :)”.

Social ties established and strengthened at the Falls had a beneficial effect on the wellbeing of many participants. Respondents to the 2010 esurvey indicated a significant impact from attending the Falls in obtaining social and emotional support for themselves (Q16 2010 and Q17 2010). Eighty-three percent of respondents admitted to being able to turn to friends for emotional support with forty-eight percent of respondents indicating that the Falls had strengthened that source of support. Similarly, eight-six percent of respondents admitted to being able to turn to friends for social support with sixty-four percent of respondents indicating that the Falls had strengthened that source of support.

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<sup>57</sup> AusAID’s Australian Youth Ambassadors for Development (see AusAID, 2013).

Attendance at the Falls afforded a significant opportunity to assist with mental wellbeing. Ninety percent of respondents to the 2010 esurvey claimed that they felt cheerful and in good spirits most or all of the time while at the Falls (Q18 2010). The impact that the Falls had on being cheerful and in good spirits following attendance was significant as well (Q19 2010). Fifty-nine percent of respondents believed that the Falls either had quite a lot of or total influence on them being cheerful and in good spirits. Only seven percent felt that the Falls had no influence at all.

Seventy-five percent of respondents to the same esurvey claimed that they felt calm and relaxed most or all of the time while at the Falls (Q18 2010). While not to the same level as the feeling cheerful and in good spirits data, the role that the Falls played in being calm and relaxed following attendance was also significant (Q19 2010). Forty-six percent of respondents believed that the Falls either had quite a lot of or total influence on them feeling calm and relaxed. Only twelve percent felt that the Falls had no influence at all.

Fifty-nine percent of respondents to the esurvey claimed that they felt active and vigorous most or all of the time while at the Falls (Q18 2010). Arguably, this figure may have been lower compared to the feeling cheerful and in good spirits data when taking into consideration that the vibe of the Falls, as discussed in theme two, was chilled and relaxed. This may have played a role in participants not wanting to be active and vigorous per se, however ‘motivations’ were not specifically examined in this research other than seeking insights into why a participant might have attended the Falls. The impact that the Falls played in being active and vigorous following attendance (Q19 2010) was of similar level to the previous results. Fifty-five percent of respondents believed that the Falls either had quite a lot of or total influence on them being active and vigorous post-Falls. Fourteen percent felt that the Falls had no influence at all.

Financial support, however, was of a much lower impact in that less than half of all respondents indicated that they had friends to turn to for financial support. Eleven percent of all respondents indicated that the Falls played a role in strengthening their access to financial support. Access to an eleven percent economic return on social investment by study participants in only three days is still a finding of interest worthy of further exploration in future research.

While limited in its depth of examination of health and wellbeing aspects due to limited questioning in the survey tools, this theme does illuminate some of the potential for productive value to be extracted from contexts like the Falls. Future research into the health and wellbeing aspects may reveal further insight.

Overall, the evidence in this theme indicates that the Falls, as an informal leisure context, affords opportunities to obtain work, to build human capital, to improve physical and mental wellbeing and to inspire participation in wider society. There was economic value being facilitated through social ties fostered at the Falls. These indications illustrate an offering of economic outcomes outside of the more direct employment and tourism spends that event organisers are often forced to justify themselves against for government support.

# **Informal Leisure as a Source of Social Capital Formation: *A Festival Case Study***

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## **6. Place Friends: Reconfiguring Social Capital**

## 6.1 Introduction

The world is changing and how we socialise and recreate is an expression of these changes (for example: Warde et al., 2005, Schuller, 2007, Jacke, 2009). The aim of this research is to discover how these shifts in the social landscape engender changes in social capital configuration. Specifically, reflecting the emergence of individual activities, new forms of leisure and the places where this leisure occurs, the study has focussed on the intersection of informal leisure activity and social activity and what role characteristics of place can play in this – an informal leisure context. This shift and change in contexts (reviewed in chapter two) has in turn revealed new considerations:

- (1) Leisure engagement builds social capital (and has done so for a long time) but the leisure landscape is now changing and new forms of leisure are emerging; and
- (2) Social capital has value but the changing social landscape suggests the emergence of new forms of social capital.

These broader contextual changes raise other considerations:

- (1) Places are socially constructed and can play a role in shaping social ties; and
- (2) A focus on the role of individuals (actors) in these new and/or emerging contexts may elucidate insight into contemporary social capital.

These considerations have, in turn, framed the focus of this research with the central question being:

*Do informal leisure contexts build contemporary social networks and, subsequently, social capital?*

To address this question, a series of sub-questions were proposed:

1. *Are weak ties present in informal leisure contexts and, if so, what role do they play in generating social capital, and how?*
2. *What are the characteristics of these contexts that can assist to build social capital?*
3. *How do informal leisure contexts support and/or expand the ideas proposed by Granovetter and researchers of social capital?*

This research utilises a case study of the Falls (a three-day, camping-based music festival) to examine these questions. Specifically, the Falls is closely examined to gain insights into the interaction between informal leisure activity, place characteristics and social ties. The research findings point to a reconfiguring of social capital.

Does the Falls afford opportunities for creating social ties that would not happen if it was absent? Arguably, yes. The analysis of the data collected during this research indicates that the Falls was not all about the music. It was not just a music festival. This reinforces the findings of others (for example: Bowen and Daniels, 2005, Pegg and Patterson, 2010, Packer and Ballantyne, 2011, Gibson and Connell, 2012). Analysis of the data and participants' reactions in the previous chapter show that anticipation and excitement can build for months and the effects can remain with the participant long after attending. This suggests that there is something more at work and that the three distinct, yet intertwined, vibes of the place, people and the activities do foster social capital albeit which may be expressed in new ways.

It was evident from analysis of the data that social ties did matter to participants in this research, even if subconsciously. Their networks created and/or strengthened at the Falls often continued beyond the event period. With increased frequency of



interactions, the opportunity for the strengthening of ties increased. Similarly, frequent attendance at the Falls and the familiarity of the site, camping norms and a sense of community created a sense of place reflected as a third home. This, in turn, assisted to form social capital.

This sense of place, home and community was facilitated through repeated use of the space and repeated interactions within the space. The close physical proximity of users within the Festival space also enhanced the opportunity for frequent interactions. The emergent social networks were often productive for participants and the wider community – a characteristic of social capital identified by Coleman (1988).

These features observed from the data lead the researcher to propose that social capital was embedded at the Falls and was, therefore, an asset to be leveraged. It was driven by actors that engaged within the space in an array of forms – identified in the research as friends, friends of friends, Falls Friends and Randoms. The emergence of these kinds of actors and interactions are particularly interesting in the context of contemporary informal leisure contexts and the possible types of ties and linkages.

This chapter explores the insights gained from this study. First, the thesis examines the presence or absence and the fostering of social capital in informal leisure contexts. As was outlined in chapter three, findings are examined in the context of the ABS (2004) indicators of social capital. What emerges is that the Falls facilitated social networks which not only exhibited both substance and productive value but also exhibited unique characteristics illustrative of a new/emerging form of social capital. Second, the chapter seeks to illuminate the role and impact of weak ties in the creation of social capital.

Third, the chapter examines the emergence of social capital in the context of leisure and place – specifically third place – as an important ‘other’ place which fosters

social capital. To date the expressions of social capital have been framed around more formal contexts that structure interactions and focus on bonding capital. This study argues that it is timely to look at contemporary contexts that reflect shifts to informal, more individual activities. While leisure has been integral to the understanding of social capital, the expression of leisure and the places where it is enacted is a potent context for this study. The interaction of leisure and place is a critical underpinning for this study. Specifically the study sought to examine the role of contemporary third places in supporting the fostering of social capital. While not 'urban' the study draws on Oldenburg's (1999) third place characteristics to identify if the Falls can be argued to be a third place.

Finally, the research framework which articulated the inter-relationships between social capital, SWT, leisure and place is considered and a new platform is proposed. Do the findings deepen the understanding of the interactions of these concepts as a construct to understand contemporary social capital?

### **6.2 Evidence of Social Capital at the Falls**

It is evident that social capital was accumulated at and extracted from the Falls. The Falls exhibited characteristics of social capital albeit not like traditional social capital. There were bonds and bridges but not in the linear, group-focussed form that Putnam (1995) espouses. Rather, the characteristics of social capital created at the Falls created a predominantly weak-tied structure with pockets of strong ties often randomly linked through place-based factors. Yet, simultaneously this weak structure did display qualities normally associated with strong-bonded groups. This suggests a new/evolving configuration of social capital, or at least a hybrid.

The nature of these insights from the Falls presents some challenges to previous studies on social capital. For example, Etzioni (2000, cited in Glover and Hemingway, 2005, p. 294) argues:

What truly remains to be documented is what people talk about when they bowl, play bridge, or go bird watching together. I grant that all are occasions in which people reinforce friendships. However, I am less confident that they are also places where people shore up their moral commitments, talk about basic moral questions, such as what is right and wrong, or encourage each other to be better than they would be otherwise – things that are essential prerequisites of a good society.

This research potentially alleviates some of Etzioni's concerns because the data shows that the Falls was a place "where people [could] shore up their moral commitments, talk about basic moral questions, such as what is right and wrong, or encourage each other to be better than they would be otherwise". In this regard, evidence suggests this was achieved largely through the creation and strengthening of weak ties – lending credence to the argument that weak ties can generate substance (Granovetter, 1973, 1983) and have relevance in a contemporary environment. Further, the kinds of informal activity and place characteristics observed at the Falls can foster a sense of community – created from productive social capital.

The Falls case study highlights that informal leisure contexts can foster the creation of types of social capital, however research into other contexts is needed to confirm this. Outlined in chapter two, the *Culture and Political, Legal and Institutional Conditions* framework<sup>58</sup> (see Figure 7 in chapter three) can be utilised to examine social capital and contexts surrounding (see ABS, 2004, p. 14). Specifically, the four components within the social capital circle contained within in the framework (namely *network qualities*, *network structure*, *network transactions* and *network types*)<sup>59</sup> are used in this section of the thesis to examine the social capital identified

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<sup>58</sup> All references to indicators of social capital and their underpinning definitions in section 6.2 of this chapter are drawn from the *Culture and Political, Legal and Institutional Conditions* framework (see Figure 7) unless otherwise stated.

<sup>59</sup> Some indicators of social capital referenced in section 6.2 of this chapter (for example: transience/mobility, power relationships, negotiation) are difficult to assess against the Falls given the brief period of the Falls operation (three days annually). However, valuable insights are still gained toward these. In addition, numerous indicators of social capital are inter-dependent (for example:

at the Falls. Analysis using the ABS criteria confirms the creation of social capital, at least in some form, at the Falls and that it has an array of distinctive qualities, levels and strengths. The application of the ABS framework to the case study data adds considerable empirical weight to the proposition underpinning this thesis that *informal leisure contexts build contemporary social networks and, subsequently, social capital*.

### **6.2.1 Network Qualities**

Network qualities identified in the ABS framework focus on the norms and values within networks and how they assist with the functioning of these networks. These qualities encourage behavioural characteristics such as cooperation, rules and sanctions. The network qualities component of the ABS framework identifies two sub-components: *norms* and *common purpose*.

The ABS (2004, p. 42) defines common purpose as “a shared intention or motivation, an intended or desired result, end or aim for which a group or community come together”. Having a common purpose can demonstrate an involvement in a community. It can also demonstrate cooperation and social and civic participation. To have a common purpose means to share intention and motivation to bring a community or group together with a common aim. It is clear that festivals can develop a common purpose (Arcodia and Whitford, 2006).

The Falls data shows this to be the case in a number of ways. First, repeat visitors to the Festival suggested a shared interest in and enjoyment of these kinds of activities and their associated networking. Second, a significant majority of participants in the study shared a common purpose of wanting to be at the Falls to socialise and have respite through fun activity. This meant catching up with some friends, enjoying the atmosphere, listening to some music and getting away from day-to-day life.

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sharing knowledge versus communication mode). In an attempt to not be repetitive, insights gained are referenced under the most appropriate indicator heading.

What is especially noteworthy is that this shared purpose created a kind of membership to a community – the Falls community. Don Murchie from “Walcha Show” (cited in Gibson and Stewart, 2009, p. 33) notes this sense of connection and belonging stating: young people “are now beginning to realise that there is a value in belonging to an organisation or community, part of society”. The Falls study supports Murchie’s comment. A desire for respite in escaping the norms of wider society and engagement with the norms of the Falls was evident.

Chapter two established that a norm is “a ***socially embodied*** and ***individually perceived imperative*** that such-and-so an action must be performed in such-and-so a fashion” (Little, 2009).<sup>60</sup> Trust and norms such as reciprocity, sense of efficacy, cooperation, acceptance of diversity and inclusiveness sit at the core of social capital. The Falls displayed an array of norms: it housed and transacted in trust as well as norms based on reciprocity, tolerance, respect, cooperation and acceptance. Further, there was an enforcement of rules and sanctions around behaviour, albeit not written down but known to members (of the Falls community) nonetheless. This warrants elaboration.

Trust was evident at the Falls – in abundance. People felt safe and welcome day and night and were willing to invite less known attendees such as Randoms and Falls Friends to their campsite. The event was family-friendly and parents felt that it was a safe environment for their children. Numerous participants commented on how good it was to have families at the event. These observations support similar experiences reported by Pegg and Patterson (2010, p. 96) in their study of the Tamworth Country Music Festival. They note:

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<sup>60</sup> Emphasis by Little (2009).

While reference to atmosphere was repeatedly and directly made, people also separately commented on the friendliness of the event, people, and artists. When discussing the atmosphere in general, there was a sense that Tamworth was different due to its friendliness, “the friendly and helpful people of Tamworth”, the “music-friendly people”, and the chance to make new friends because “everyone is so friendly”.

From trust, even if perceived, often came reciprocity. “Random acts of kindness” were commonly reported at the Falls. The data illustrated numerous examples of people helping with car troubles, pitching tents, carrying bags and returning wallets intact. These are all examples of reciprocity. This assistance extended beyond the operational to include attendee health and wellbeing. One did not need to be a friend to receive or give help; attendance and being part of the community was sufficient. Indeed, the data in this study suggests that the level of trust created at the Falls, even for someone unknown, encouraged “random acts of kindness”.

These findings support the work of Glover and Hemingway (2005, p. 396) who report: “Reciprocity exists not as a general cultural norm, but rather as an expectation attached to membership in a specific network”. At the Falls, reciprocity did not necessarily appear to be expected by everyone but was welcomed – often with surprise, because it was not necessarily part of life outside of the Falls.

Alongside trust, people at the Falls often demonstrated a sense of efficacy in their approach to daily life at the event. Self-efficacy results from self-confidence that enables someone to feel that they can do something and “involves interacting with society and learning how the networks, norms and trust work in the sense of power and resources” (Falk, 2001, cited in ABS, 2004, p. 34). Indicators of a sense of efficacy include confidence in solving problems collectively, belief in a level of influence on other members of the network and whether others’ views are taken into account when decisions are made. This study suggests that, as well as building trust and reciprocity, the “random acts of kindness” identified at the Falls

demonstrates a level of confidence to enact on the level of trust to help one another. It was subtle but it was there.

Membership of these intangible social networks at the Falls was also expressed in other ways. For example, “Most people [at the Falls] are respectful [toward not leaving rubbish behind] and clean their own site and help the neighbours” (nx, 2012). One should look after their ‘home’. Social rules were enforced such as recycling waste, being environmentally aware, tolerating (and even celebrating) diversity and not “messing up” someone else’s fun. The data shows that the Falls members were generally tolerant of their fellow camper in contrast to the non-Falls environment. Further, people felt safe to be themselves and to be different without negative criticism so much so that it was normal to be different while being a member of the same Falls community. These norms and rules were driven by an evident self-managed culture where collective action occurred, even if it was not explicit. Participants, in the main, cooperated to create a community.

Coming to the Falls (an informal leisure context) was an escape. Attendance at the Falls invited membership of a community. The Falls was a home for them and the house rules were evident. While an escape, attendance nevertheless accumulated and extracted benefits created and built around trust, reciprocity and social ties. The desired result was for everyone to have fun and not negatively impact on others. Trust and norms were fostered through this common purpose.

### **6.2.2 Network Structure**

Networks are patterns of relationships and it is within these networks that social capital exists (Putnam, 1995). Therefore, identifying that the Falls contains networks is important to illustrate what form/s of social capital exist/s within them. It assists in demonstrating the value that might be extracted from this/these form/s of social capital. Characteristics of a network structure outlined in ABS framework indicators

include *size, frequency, intensity, modes of communication, density, openness, transience, mobility and power relationships*.

### **Network Size**

The ABS (2004, p. 67) framework describes network size as “the number and variety of attachments individuals or groups may have”. The network size of the Falls was, arguably, large given that a majority of the 16,000 attendees were ‘plugged’ into this network whether they knew they were or not. Those who were not ‘plugged in’ could easily do so. The actual size of the Falls network is unable to be determined precisely as it is a unique network that is dynamic, nimble and fluid. More research would need to be undertaken to map the network interactions to enable this to occur. As stated in the introductory chapter, this thesis does not focus on mapping networks.

However, an important insight as to the dynamic of network size centres on the emergent concept identified as a *Falls Friend*. In chapter five, a Falls Friend is scoped as a person met at the Falls. For some, everyone is a Falls Friend while for others there are *Randoms* who have the potential to be a Falls Friend. They are a Random until they are met, then they become identified, even if subconsciously, as a Falls Friend. As one survey respondent (2011) explained, the “Falls is the most fun you can have in 3 days with 16,000 strangers who become your ‘falls friends’”.<sup>61</sup> The ABS indicator for network size determines that it is “the proportion of people who have a close relative or friends living within 30 minutes of them” (2004, p. 69). A weakness of the ABS indicator is that it does not provide further information as to what constitutes a friend. The Falls data reveals other dimensions of friends – an extended and dynamic network of Randoms to Falls Friends to friends of friends to friends. Randoms and then Falls Friends are what Fingerman (2009) would call

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<sup>61</sup> Emphasis by survey respondent.



consequential strangers – they may not be intimate friends but they are peripheral ties that do matter.

While the network size indicator is focussed on the size of the social network, the physical size of the Falls also played an important role in creating its social network structure. Size yielded opportunities to meet and greet which, in turn, enabled a rapid growth in network size. An important factor in social capital development is the frequency of social interactions. The physical size of the Falls facilitates frequency of interactions as it operates within a confined space. The ABS suggests that proximity and acquaintance with neighbours are indicators of network size. The sheer congestion of the Falls with neighbours in tent city all living very close to each other facilitated proximity and neighbourly acquaintance. Attendees, in the main, considered a fellow attendee to be either a friend, a friend of a friend, a Falls Friend or a Random (who was a potential friend). They were social ties along a strength continuum, reinforcing a provocation in this thesis that the SWT work of Granovetter (1973, 1983) may assist to better understand contemporary social capital.

Another indicator of network size relates to the number of people from whom one can access resources in a time of crisis. Reciprocity at the Falls fostered the sharing of, and access to, resources. The many examples of the willingness to help people while at the Falls does argue for an existence of a large network size particularly when these levels of trust and norms expressed were often those associated with stronger-bonded social networks.

Arguably, the network size at the Falls was large but the question remains as to the network strength and how easily the ties could break if not maintained. While a follow up study on network strength may illuminate more, analysis of the esurvey (2010) showed that when ties were maintained there were indications of a high level of personal support. The Falls network did appear weak and easily dissipated if not maintained. While possibly self-evident, these findings resonate with those

observed in an Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) report (2001b) noted by the ABS (2004, p. 109):

A characteristic of all types of capital is that stocks depreciate over time and increase through investment and (in some cases) natural regeneration. For all of these resources, changes in flows take time to affect underlying stock. Another common feature of all types of capital is that they accumulate and are restored slowly, while they can be dissipated quickly if not used sustainably.

### **Frequency of Interactions**

The frequency of interactions described at the Falls reframed the event from a music festival to a social activity for some, especially those who have visited the Falls on more than one occasion. For example: the “Falls was more social for me this time. Last time I saw lots of bands. This time I enjoyed the vibe and took time to be more social” (survey 2011). Similarly attendees consistently expressed the view that a three-day festival was better, different and more social than a one-day festival. Not only could the event be enjoyed over several days but also the time span facilitated more time to engage with both the social and cultural activities. The extra days increased familiarity with the people and the location.

Time plays an important role in establishing and strengthening a network. DeLanda (2006) and the NESF (2003) argue that social networks need time to build and others like Schuller (2007) suggest this is a reason why social capital is best researched over time. Time is a critical enabler in fostering social capital. Frequency and intensity of interactions foster social capital (ABS, 2004) and this became obvious from the experience of the Falls. Time spent at the Falls influenced behaviour and afforded opportunities to meet and strengthen bonds. Thus the Falls was frequently a place where bonds that were weakened during the year were renewed and restrengthened. Given that social lives and particularly informal leisure activities are increasingly less-structured, events and activities such as those encompassed by the

Falls can fill a gap. The Falls offers an escape from lives where these traditional bonds have been loosened. However, it is possible that the Falls offers a new or contemporary informal leisure context (a shift from the past) and yet enables opportunities to reconnect and create networks and a sense of community. Although music festivals of this kind are not new, they can fill a void of social activity in people's lives as people 'bowl alone' (see Putnam, 2000).

Time spent at the Falls meant people bumped into others. Bumping into people, whether they were friends, friends of friends, Falls Friends or Randoms, was described as easy. Given Granovetter's (1973, 1983) contention that frequency of contact is important to maintaining and strengthening ties, the Falls created opportunities to configure weak ties. At the Falls, time turned Randoms into Falls Friends and Falls Friends into friends. The Falls turned friends of friends into friends and friends into closer friends. Interestingly, the Falls built and strengthened both strong and weak ties. The size of the Falls site and the close proximity of campsites increased the frequency of interactions and the opportunities to make friends.

The camping area of the Falls, in particular, facilitated the strengthening of these relationships. This finding aligns with a study of two camping grounds by Foley and Hayllar (2007) where re-visits to the same camping area strengthened relationships. The study data shows that the camping area of the Falls strengthened existing ties as well as encouraged the forming of new bonds. The impact of time spent in the camping area and the frequency of interactions within these time frames were determining factors in maximising the strengthening opportunities. This is not to discount the role that other areas of the Falls play in fostering social connectivity but the camping areas were integral in facilitating frequency of interactions. Tent city facilitated the strengthening of networks and encouraged the sharing of information and norms. It was not just a place to sleep.

### **Density and Openness**

According to the ABS framework, openness relates to the strength and structure of links in a social network. Open networks are loose where few people are linked, sometimes causing isolation of members. Closer networks are denser where members are more strongly linked. The Falls was an enigma when it came to assessing its density and openness. For example, the Falls was porous. This challenges Putnam's (1995) social capital theory, as described by Blackshaw and Long (2005), in that it was neither a linear 'like us' (bonds) nor a 'not like us' (bridges) format. The Falls had elements that were open and loose as well as closed and dense. It was somewhere in between and both at the same time – offering insight into configurations that did not easily fit into the traditional assessment of a social capital structure. The Falls contained a myriad of both weak and strong ties which argues that a Falls community does exist. Not everyone knew each other nor were they likely to. Nevertheless, every Random was a potential Falls Friend who then had the potential to be a friend. The existence of Randoms in the network also suggests openness, furthering the view that the Falls was not a closed network and that the definition of openness needs closer attention.

The data from the Falls exposes some of the 'clunkiness' of the ABS framework in assessing density and openness. While the Falls challenges some of the traditional views it also suggests that elements of closed and open structures can co-exist in one location. Coleman (1998, cited in ABS, 2004, p74)<sup>62</sup> argues that "the strength of a closed network is a sharing of norms, a developed sense of trust, and a clear expectation about the way each member of the network will relate to another". This is interesting when looking at the Falls. On the one hand it illustrates a plethora of examples of weak ties of varying levels yet also displays many qualities of Coleman's closed network. For example, unknown people could easily tap into these closed network attributes because the Falls had social rules, trust and norms and it

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<sup>62</sup> It would appear that the ABS erroneously cites Coleman (1988) as Coleman (1998).

exhibited a collective consciousness while concurrently embracing weak-tied members who were Randoms and Falls Friends. These were weak ties that afforded closed network attributes and every member had the potential to be linked (if they were not already considered to be linked purely by being in the Falls location). These contradictions suggest new insights about contemporary social capital. Is it possible that the Falls, in creating its own community, was a closed network? It could be argued that the answer is yes given that it was only attendees at the event that could access the networks on the ground and it displayed closed network attributes. The lack of technological access added to the closed network as access to the 'outside' was very limited.

Conversely, it could be argued that it was not a closed network because not everyone knew each other. Weak ties with much smaller pockets of stronger ties were the norm. The Falls, as a festival attracting 16,000 people, was evidently an open network that welcomed all-comers but with a level of closure to enable norms, rules and obligations. Members, in the main, became members of the network simply by attending the event. Therefore, it could be argued that the Falls was a community containing a meta-network comprising both closed and open sub-networks that became interlinked and strengthened during the time spent in the space. Bridges between groups were numerous and closed groups appeared willing to be opened, albeit temporarily during the event. Weak ties were prevalent. The role of catalysts such as Randoms and the emergence of Falls Friends suggests that Granovetter's (1973, 1983) approach that looks at tie strength between individuals rather than a group approach is a more insightful approach to understanding the structure. The mapping of these networks would produce further insight.

### **Transience and Mobility**

The transience and mobility indicators of social capital proved difficult to use to assess the composition of social capital at the Falls. These indicators relate to both geographic and labour mobility as well as the rate of change in membership of

organisations. Although there was evidence of attendees drifting into the network on arrival and then out of the network on departure, the three days spent within the Falls space was insufficient to assess the impact as outlined by the ABS framework. What can be said is that the transient nature of moving in and out of the Falls network points toward an open network with looser ties, albeit the remote location of the event limited transience and mobility during the event. This point reinforces that the Falls exhibited characteristics of openness, yet closure was evident. Certainly the location or place context contributed to an almost unique composition of social connectivity. Interestingly, the data also revealed a longing by attendees to be back in the network after leaving the event. As one esurvey respondent (2010) stated: “Loved every second! Wish I was there right now!!” Some members simply did not desire to be transient and mobile when it came to this network – a point that deserves closer attention in the context of contemporary social capital and its creation.

### **Power Relationships**

Power relationships are important to social positioning and resource acquisition. Bourdieu (1986) argues that social capital enables power and privilege – it has a vertical aspect to it. The Putnam (1995) scoping of social capital, on the other hand, arguably excludes power from the process making it a more horizontal structure. Woolcock (2001) added linking capital to the bridging and bonding capital concepts bringing a vertical dimension to Putnam’s approach. The data shows that the Falls was a leveller – that it exhibited a largely horizontal structure. All-comers, patrons and members came as relative equals. Power and privilege, in their common understanding were, in the main, left at the gate. This is also a common characteristic of a third place (see Oldenburg, 1999).

The Falls facilitated access. This included access to an array of people from an intricate web of backgrounds. To obtain power attendees would need to relinquish traditional power attributes such as social status and personal dominance that are

characteristic of wider society. The data suggests that exerting power and privilege as commonly understood was not the norm at the Falls. In regard to attendees, the Falls exhibited a flat power structure where embracing the Falls vibe enabled access to and across the flat network structure. There was evidence of collective power in being a Falls member.

Yet some privilege was present as volunteers, contractors, artists and staff were conferred some additional resources such as back-stage passes, hot showers and VIP camping spaces. However, this was largely related to worker entitlements and less about difference in social capital. It is acknowledged that social status and the strengthening of ties with fellow personnel may have had some influence in accessing additional access to backstage entertainment.

### **Communication**

Data collected in the esurvey (2010) revealed a high level of face-to-face contact with friends known prior to attending the Falls – this is a point made by the ABS (2004, p. 71): “Face-to-face contact is perhaps the most satisfying form of social contact”. Yet, social and ubiquitous technologies were equally important for communication. The use of technology was significant in the day-to-day lives of many Falls members. Being a Facebook friend meant low-maintenance and fewer obligations to engage in social activity of a more intimate nature. It was the ‘soft option’.

The data shows that technology enabled post-Falls communication and, indeed, made it easier to become a social media contact. The person met then became a virtual Falls Friend if participants tracked each other down post-event. This allowed the Falls network to extend beyond its physical space. For some, social media was of advantage and a less intrusive means of keeping in touch because they did not really know the person that they had met. This is similar to the argument of Kavanaugh et al. (2005, p. 119) who suggest that “the Internet, like other forms of communication,

helps people maintain contact with members of their social network or group, cultivate ties, and garner aid and resources, including information”. By maintaining, at least, a social media link, Falls members were maintaining membership of the group and, hence, maintaining social capital.

The technology blackout at the Falls created a barrier to the maintenance of weak ties. It was the responsibility of members to track people down post-event to find them on social media whereas access to technology at the Falls would have assisted to collect contact details. This does suggest social media and ubiquitous technologies are important enablers of weak ties. Future studies into the role of social media in the accumulation and extraction of social capital and the strengthening of social ties is encouraged as part of ongoing research.

### ***6.2.3 Network Transactions***

The ABS framework describes network transactions as shared information, negotiation and financial assistance occurring between individuals within networks and between organisations. When discussing the work of Putnam (1995), Blackshaw and Long (2005) say that transaction costs are reduced, information flows have productive potential, collective problems can be solved and tolerance is promoted through social capital. Information sharing facilitates social transactions, conveys behaviour and norms, builds density and shapes the social capital form within the network. These kinds of network transactions are clearly evident in the data.

### **Sharing Support and Knowledge**

Support mechanisms such as assistance, encouragement and integration can be facilitated through social capital (Putnam, 1995). Access to support (emotional, financial, social), inspiration to undertake further educational study, learning skills, cause motivation and finding out about job opportunities are examples identified in the Falls data. Despite the relative brevity of time spent at the Falls, evidence of



access to personal wellbeing support is consistently mentioned. As Glover (2006, p. 364) notes, “more ties are presumably better, yet one tie might be sufficient to gain access to a crucial resource (Foley and Edwards, 1999)”. One tie was sometimes sufficient to obtain support and for some, in the example of a Random, there was only a perceived tie. Yet the Falls data revealed a view that this perceived tie could be trusted as a source to receive support from or to give the support to.

A significant majority of participants in the esurvey claimed to be able to turn to friends for emotional support and almost half of respondents indicated that the Falls had strengthened that source of support. Similarly, eighty-six percent of respondents admitted to being able to turn to friends for social support and over half of the respondents indicated that the Falls has strengthened that source of support. Emotional support, as an indicator of social capital, did exist at the Falls. Most people felt in good spirits, calm, relaxed and cheerful at least most of the time. Almost ninety percent of respondents believed that the Falls influenced them feeling this way post-event. The impact of the Falls on attendees’ personal health and wellbeing socially and emotionally was an unexpected revelation. Social capital was in existence at the Falls and was a resource to be extracted.

There was evidence of financial support able to be accessed as a consequence of attendance at the Falls. Woolcock (2001) says that access to social capital enables access to financial resources and almost half of the participants in the esurvey indicated they had people to turn to for financial support. Eleven percent of all respondents indicated that the Falls played a role in strengthening these kinds of ties. The Falls data showed that access to financial support was less common than access to emotional and social support. This suggests that commitment of handing over cash requires more time than the three days for bond strength to build enough trust. Evidence of what the ABS refer to as *sharing support* was there but it needed time.

Being welcomed, accepted and then integrated into the community are identified by the ABS as indicators of social capital. A community can enable access to support. The Falls community does exist and people generally felt welcome and safe to be a part of it. They felt that others were friendly. They also felt that the place was a “home”, especially for those who attended the Falls more than once. A feeling of home also aligns with features of third place (Oldenburg, 1999). The data showed that, with the exception of ‘bogans’, ‘tools’, underage drinkers and the like, everyone was welcome into their “home”. This emerged as a common response from Falls attendees. Similarly, the perceptions of friendliness and sense of belonging expressed by Falls attendees supports the ABS indicators of integration into a community and, subsequently, social capital. This is another example of the existence of social capital at the Falls.

Common action is the final group of ABS indicators of sharing support. The Falls data revealed many “random acts of kindness”. These random acts are evidence of common actions such as helping people unlock cars, returning wallets, pitching a neighbour’s tent and carrying bags. There were also examples of people under the influence of alcohol and/or drugs being cared for by Randoms. There may not have been large-scale ‘calls to action’ but there existed immediate, consistent and generously given support for people in need. Trust, or perceived trust, in fellow attendees facilitated common action. Importantly, the interesting insight for social capital theory is that many of these acts were displayed by previously unconnected actors with no social history.

As discussed in chapter two, “In order for something to qualify as capital, and therefore as a vehicle for investment, there should be some understanding of how it might be increased” (Schuller, 2007, p. 23). The Falls was a place and a process where it can be increased. Evidence of exchanging knowledge, skills and information between individuals and groups is integral to identifying social capital (ABS, 2004) and there were numerous examples in the data of the sharing of information. Examples included finding out about job and educational opportunities, joining

causes and learning new skills. These were obtained through means that indicated the existence of a social capital and the transactions facilitated by it. Social capital was being extracted and was productive. This is similar to Granovetter's (1973) observations of respondents to his research "that the manner in which they had found their present job was somewhat out of the ordinary, an unusual occurrence" (as discussed by Boorman, 1975, p. 243). Falls attendees found out about other festivals, places to meet, where to find friends and where to travel in Tasmania. These all occurred through social interactions.

Lin (2001, p. 19) describes social capital as "*investment in social relations with expected returns in the marketplace*". The Falls data does not reveal social capital (and its givers and receivers) in this way. Rather, not one participant in the research described their social investment as having expected returns. Instead profits of membership (see Bourdieu, 1986) seemed easily obtained due to the 'easy to meet' nature of the Falls as weak ties could be rapidly developed.

### **Negotiation and Applying Sanctions**

The ABS (2004) suggests that negotiation is fundamental to conflict resolution and assists to relieve friction in transactions. Because the Falls is only in operation for three days annually, there were limited examples observed in the data of friction that required negotiation. Evidence of negotiation was not explicit in the findings but it seems to have been critical albeit implicitly in articulating norms – especially around giving and receiving reciprocal benefits. Examples such as assisting others to pitch tents reduced the agitation of people who were struggling. Helping others negotiate difficult situations contributed to the vibe and created social capital. It reduced the potential for friction between neighbours as it 'broke the ice'.

Rules were evident at the Falls. One does not ruin someone else's fun. One helps other people in need. One cleans up their campsite. One respects the environment. One, at least, tolerates other people and the 'vibe'. These rules were unwritten yet

integral to the vibe of the event. Sanctions were subtle yet known to the majority, albeit difficult to identify how sanctions were applied and in what form. It seemed that it was a casual approach that was the norm to enforce the rules. A “c’mon mate, settle down a bit” approach fitted the vibe. The application of sanctions adds to the evidence that social capital existed at the Falls. These sanctions are evidence of characteristics normally attributed to bonded groups. It was also apparent that different sections of the Falls camping area contained differing versions of the rules and were, in the main, honoured. For example, in the ‘Red Zone’ one could participate more freely in activities such as playing of loud music from car stereos and making noise in the early hours of the morning. These activities were not as tolerated in other areas such as the family camping area.

### **6.2.4 Network Types**

As discussed in chapter two, in social capital theory there exists three network forms – namely bonding, bridging and linking (see Putnam, 1995, Woolcock, 2001). In brief, bonding relates to the social networking between like-minded people within defined groups, bridging relates to the social networking between people of different backgrounds and groups and linking relates to gaining access to people and organisations in another social layer in the social hierarchy. As discussed previously, the network structure of the Falls was distinctive as it displayed characteristics of being simultaneously weak, strong and a combination of both. The Falls displayed characteristics of both bonding and bridging social capital. Further, the relatively flat structure of the Falls social network yielded another view of linking capital. This final section looks more closely at the nature of these three forms of social capital.

Stronger-bonded groups are more like-minded and share common norms (Granovetter, 1973 in ABS, 2004). The Falls community, collectively, displayed characteristics of being closely-bonded evidenced by trust and norms, shared values and sharing support. There existed network closure, a characteristic of bonding capital which became denser over time. Eighty-eight percent of respondents to the

esurvey indicated that they had not come to the Falls alone. They generally shared campsites and equipment and worked together on campsite maintenance.

There were examples of sub-network closure which provides evidence of strong-bonded groups within the social system. The congregation or clustering of like-mindedness in areas such as the so-called Red Zone and the family camping area appeared to create sub-communities within the broader Falls community. This clustering brought stronger-bonded friends together but also brought in friends of friends. This had mixed response. Some attendees enjoyed the existence of the family camping area. Some enjoyed the Red Zone as this was their vibe. Others disliked the inclusion of young people arguing it should be an adults-only event. Others disliked the rowdiness of some sections and could not understand why people in those areas were not enjoying themselves.

Yet others exhibited a contradictory openness. The assembling of convoys enabled large groups of people to set up camp together. However, it should be noted that the participants of the convoy were often friends of friends (bridges) – thus not all known to each other. Other smaller groups displayed similar characteristics although were often influenced by the Falls vibe and let their guard down. Letting their guard down enabled friends of friends and the like into the network as well as the place-based actors in Falls Friends and Randoms.

Suffice to say, the strong-bonded groups were generally small and where not small comprised friends of friends and Falls Friends. What is interesting is that these groups grew over time and became interlinked into the matrix of weak ties. Certainly, there was clear evidence of bonding capital but, importantly for this thesis, it was *more porous* than anticipated – arguably due to the three vibes. This points to interesting features of contemporary social places and the creation of them in a changing social context.

Bridging capital relates to bridges between groups (for example: Putnam, 2000). The ABS (2004, p. 103) framework describes it as follows:

[B]ridging refers to relations with friends, associates and colleagues with different backgrounds, for example different socioeconomic status, age, generation, race or ethnicity. (Woolcock, 2000) Bridging may also refer to those relationships where a single person or a small number of people are members of diverse groups.

There was a myriad of backgrounds at the Falls, although with a dominant younger demographic. Diversity was welcomed and even celebrated. There were friends, associates and colleagues framed as friends, friends of friends and Falls Friends.

Falls Friends and friends of friends equate to what Granovetter (1983) calls acquaintances. Granovetter's acquaintances are often interchanged with Putnam's bridges. Acquaintances allow access to information and resources, exposure to different viewpoints and diffusion of culture. Kavanaugh et al. (2005, p. 120) argue that "bridging ties facilitate the exchange of information between distinct groups, and help to expedite the flow of ideas among groups". Coleman (1988, p. 98) states that "like other forms of capital, social capital is productive, making possible the achievement of certain ends that in its absence would not be possible". This research found evidence that bridging ties existed. There was clear evidence of the sharing of information at the Falls. The information held productive value as defined by bridging capital. The study showed outcomes such as:

1. Economic – job offers, meeting future travel companions, further education inspiration, skill development
2. Social and wellbeing – access to emotional support, new and/or strengthened friendships, norm articulation and sanctioning
3. Environmental – sustainable waste management, appreciation for the environment
4. Cultural – interacting with people from different cultures and sub-cultures

5. Political – joining causes.

Linking capital affords access to other social structures of power through linking groups in the different layers in the social and power dynamic (ABS, 2004). In general, few examples of power and privilege were observed at the Falls which may indicate something about the nature of the vibe present. Indeed, rather than visualising a link to those of higher and lower status or with more or less power in a vertical form, the Falls enabled a more horizontal social structure where attendees<sup>63</sup> were equal regardless of power or privilege. The introduction of linking capital to the social capital debate by Woolcock (2001) was, in effect, in response to the critique that Putnam's scoping of social capital ignored power structures. However, the social structure at the Falls was relatively flat.

One area of assessment not considered by the ABS social capital analysis methodology related to how one might identify as part of a network. According to Glover and Hemingway (2005, p. 396), "advantages conferred by social capital exist only insofar as one is recognized as a member of such a network by other members and recognizes them in return". While at the Falls it was easy to identify a fellow network member (as they were also in attendance), there was a more nuanced picture in that attendees identified friends, friends of friends, Falls Friends and Randoms as part of the network and the implicit tie strength associated with these friend types.

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<sup>63</sup> This excludes attendees who were staff members, volunteers, contractors, VIPs or paid artists. These are people who were afforded power and privilege due to the operations of the event and were not a specific focus of this study.

## **6.3 Place Friends and a New Perspective on Social Capital**

### ***6.3.1 Social Structure of the Falls: A New Perspective***

Social capital is present and created at the Falls. Yet, social capital theory (for example: Bourdieu, 1986, Coleman, 1988, Putnam, 1995) in and of itself does not fully explain the social dynamics of the Falls. This relates to the specific questions that framed this research. For example: Is the Falls a new form, or a reconfiguration, of social capital? Does SWT theory help us to understand it more in a looser-tied, contemporary society? Do place characteristics help to reveal more about social capital? Do leisure events like the Falls also help to reveal more about social capital? It seems that the data shows that the answer is yes to all of these questions. Schuller (2007) questions whether there are new forms of social capital being developed. He goes on further to suggest that “others have challenged this [Putman’s position that social capital is on the decline], pointing to new forms of social capital which have sprouted” (p. 17). This study shows that something is different about the Falls network structure. It did not illustrate Putman’s (1995, 2000) view of social capital in a straightforward manner of social capital of simple bonded groups and bridges between them. Yet, nevertheless embedded within was strong evidence of social capital formation.

The Falls community cannot be described as simple series of groups that have links (or bridges). Rather, the data shows a complex web of dynamic, nimble and fluid ties along a strength continuum that are place-based. It is a social network where the community is delineated by sharing reciprocity and interaction, has something in common and is ever-evolving (see Beeton, 2006) while its identity is also shaped by the setting itself.

Thus a simplistic adoption of the terms bonding, bridging and linking does not assist to master an understanding of the social dynamic of the Falls. The understanding needs to be used in conjunction with Granovetter’s SWT theory. Granovetter (1973,



p. 1360) argues that “most network models deal, implicitly, with strong ties, thus confining their applicability to small, well-defined groups”. This research adds further insight into Granovetter’s point. A focus on small, well-defined groups and their strong ties (often the focus of social capital research, for example: Coleman, 1988, Putnam, 1995) would not have elucidated the insights revealed by this case study. The study revealed that a focus on individuals was as important as, if not more important than, a focus on the group.

As discussed in chapter two, the difference between what constitutes a bridge and what constitutes a weak tie is confusing. The terms are often used interchangeably but fundamentally bridges focus on links between groups whereas the SWT arguably focuses on the linkages between individuals. In this study, the Falls networks and creation of social capital is given more depth by adding the lens of the SWT. This is all the more so given the role of actors known as Falls Friends and Randoms and that groups (for example: campsites) were often made up of people known and previously unknown to each other (because of friends of friends). As outlined previously, some confusion arises because there were some strong bonded groups (for example: campsites, family groups) but it was *links between individuals that, given the porous nature of the groups, enabled a clearer understanding of how social capital was created.*

While this may be the case, the network nevertheless was built on weak ties *and* carried dominant attributes of a closed network such as norms (as described by Putnam, 2000). These weak ties would be considered very loose by comparison to Granovetter’s (1973, 1983) research but are integral to the fostering of social capital at the Falls. SWT theory is a critical explanatory tool as it helps explain the myriad of ties of varying strengths along the continuum. As Granovetter (1973 in ABS, 2004, p. 9) notes, “It is not useful, though, to limit ‘community’ to ... groups. Weak ties also provide different and valuable resources”. Importantly for the findings of this research, *an individual could trade in social capital without being a member of any particular group.* These ‘trades’ included accessing resources, reciprocal support and

aid. This study suggests that the Falls community existed as a community of mostly weak ties, supporting Granovetter's view that the word 'community' ought not be limited to bonded groups. Similarly, the ABS (2004, p. 8) work backs this in that "community may refer to the social networks themselves, or to the setting within which relationships occur".

### **6.3.2 The Strength of Place Friends: The Actor**

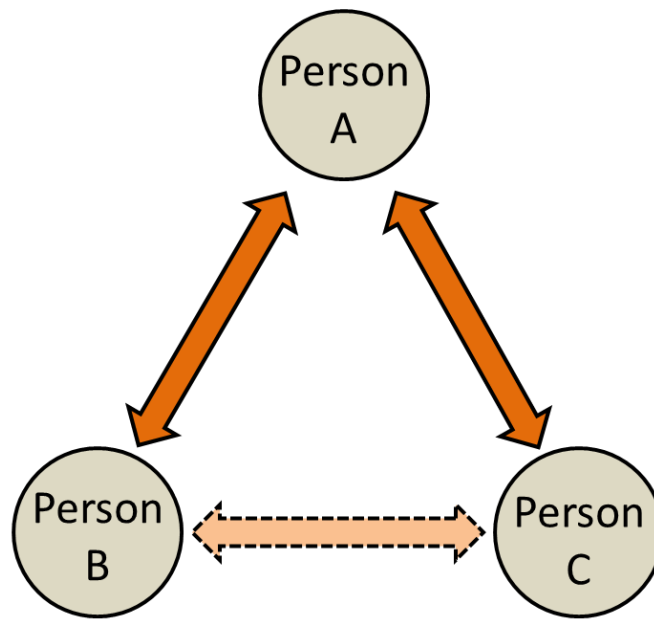
Granovetter (1973) argues that "the categories 'weak' and 'strong' ties correspond to 'acquaintances' and 'friends'" (Fliaster and Spiess, 2008, p. 101). The difference between a strong and a weak tie at the Falls appeared difficult to define. Were they acquaintances or were they friends? At the Falls, there existed friendships on varying levels where some participants in the study felt unsure if they had made a friend or not. It was more like a continuum. These were social ties that existed somewhere along a tie strength continuum and could move horizontally depending on the frequency and depth of interactions. They strengthen over time and weaken when not maintained. Time spent within the network was critical and supports Granovetter's (1973, p. 1361) suggestion that the strength of an interpersonal tie is "a (probably) linear combination of the amount of time, emotional intensity, the intimacy (mutual confiding), and the reciprocal services which characterize the tie".

For example, the emergence of the Falls Friend, accompanied by its predecessor in the friendship strength chain known as Random, was a driver for creating density in the Falls community. The Falls Friend, as an actor, was pre-dominantly a place-based friend – a *place friend*. This was a friend whose existence related to interaction across the three vibes – social, activity and place. This place friend was integral to the density of the network. This person was easy to meet and relatively like-minded in regards to the Falls' vibes. The role of the place friend, or the potential place friend known as the Random, was as the link between groups. However, *this place-based friendship could be formed without the existence of groups*. What is especially critical is that this weak tie had the potential to rapidly strengthen the network to

make it denser and to transmit closed network qualities. The ‘regulars’ (see Oldenburg, 1999) – those who attended more than once – were often place-based friends. These place-based friends were only known in that place (or space) but friends nonetheless.

This thesis proposes the concept of a *place friend* as a new theoretical concept that builds on the emergence of Falls actors known as Falls Friends and Randoms. To visualise the place friend in this thesis, Granovetter’s triadic approach is utilised instrumentally. Coleman (1988) describes people involved in the creation of social capital as actors. At the Falls actors expressed “random acts of kindness”. Many of these acts were displayed by previously unconnected actors with no prior history of social connection. These actors met in a specific space which suggests space and place may have a role in strengthening weak ties and the creation of place friends.

Figure 4 presents a visual representation of Granovetter’s (1973) work to demonstrate the SWT concept (reproduced below). According to this diagram, the strength of the ties between persons A and B and persons A and C will influence the strength of the ties between persons B and C. The place friend concept responds to the question of “what happens when person A does not exist”? Could a place replace person A?

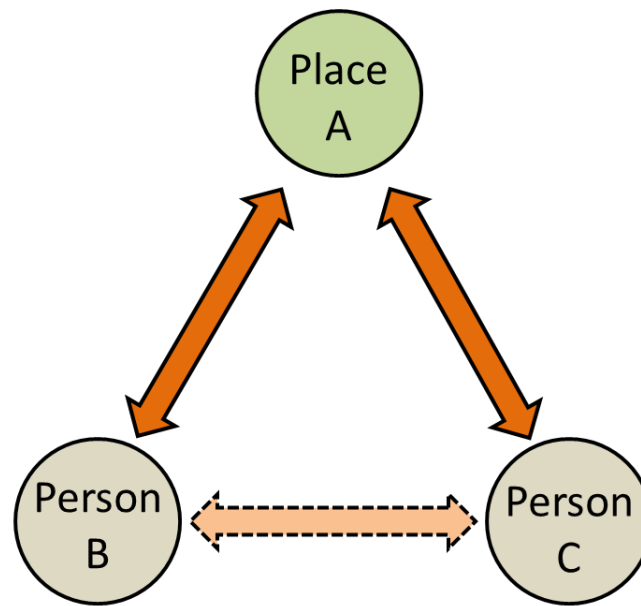


**Figure 4 Revisited – A More Likely Triad**  
(Adapted from Granovetter, 1973, p. 1363)<sup>64</sup>

Figure 18 shows person A having been replaced with place A. This creates a spatial factor (a place) in the equation as acting as a socio-spatial bridge. Persons B and C can strengthen their tie through repeated interaction within a place. Persons B and C may be what Falls members called Randoms to begin with but then may become place friends. Through interaction with place A (for example: a plaza, a bookstore, a park and Facebook) these bonds can be formed and they become what Oldenburg would refer to as regulars. This can lead to social capital as demonstrated in the Falls case study. Therefore, the identification of the place friend concept underpins the role of informal leisure contexts in strengthening ties and building social capital.

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<sup>64</sup> This diagram is an adaptation of Granovetter's Forbidden Triad model.



**Figure 18 – Place Friends Triad**  
(Adapted from Granovetter, 1973, p. 1363)<sup>65</sup>

## 6.4 Indicators of Third Place at the Falls

This study argues that place – specifically third place (Oldenburg, 1999) – is helpful in understanding contemporary social ties. The data demonstrates that the Falls exhibits third place characteristics and is a context to accumulate and extract social capital. Although the concept of third place is not a social capital theory, there are strong synergies based in social connectivity and the outcomes from it. At the Falls there existed social membership but not like that of a club. Membership was implied rather than ‘signing up’. It was informal and the regulars were Falls Friends and Randoms. It was the activities that brought people together, supporting Slater and Koo’s (2010) view that activities are important to contemporary third place identification.

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<sup>65</sup> This diagram is an adaptation of Granovetter’s Forbidden Triad model.

Might a third place be a context needed for creating social capital in contemporary society? Oldenburg (1999) recognised that third places contribute to wellbeing of individuals and the greater community because public spaces, like cafés, libraries and bars, provide a break away from the norms of everyday life. A third place is based on social activity and, hence, can be a context to build social capital. As discussed in chapter two, a “‘Third Place’ is not home (the ‘first place’) and it’s not work/school (the ‘second place’). It is a place where anyone can go to socialize.” (Lawson, 2004, p. 125). They are homes away from home (Oldenburg, 1999) and places to escape to (Glover and Parry, 2009). They are social places (Mehta and Bosson, 2010) where people can “gather primarily to enjoy each other’s company” (Oldenburg and Brissett, 1982, p. 269). One who enters the third place “may chance to meet the friend of a friend” (Oldenburg and Brissett, 1982, p. 275).

Oldenburg’s third place framework provides a useful lens to examine the role of place in the fostering of social capital and, specifically, is a framework for assessment of whether events like the Falls are third places that can foster social capital. The Falls data is considered using the lens of Oldenburg’s (1999) eight characteristics of a third place:

- *On Neutral Ground*
- *The Third Place is a Leveler* [sic]
- *Conversation is the Main Activity*
- *Accessibility and Accommodation*
- *The Regulars*
- *A Low Profile*
- *The Mood is Playful*
- *A Home Away From Home.*

When the Falls is examined through this lens two points are clear. First, the Falls does exhibit characteristics of third place. While Oldenburg may not have seen third

place theory encompass large outdoor public spaces, the Falls works in this way. Second, as the characteristics are examined, they demonstrate a relationship between third place, leisure and social capital.

### ***6.4.1 Neutral Ground and Levelling***

A social meeting place to meet that is away from a person's first and second homes is a fundamental feature of a third place. A third place is located on neutral ground (Oldenburg, 1999). The Falls is conducted on neutral ground. It is a space that no visitor owns and the only exclusiveness is that people have to purchase a ticket to attend. Even though the Falls is operated by a festival company on a private farm there is minimal feeling of there being a host. This neutral ground is important to facilitate meeting and building weak ties. "In order for the city and its neighborhoods to offer rich and varied association that is their promise and their potential, there must be neutral ground upon which people may gather" (Oldenburg, 1999, p. 22). One issue for neighbours in day-to-day life is that they may never meet (Oldenburg, 1999) but the Falls provides a neutral space where people can meet easily. The Falls, as neutral ground, also fostered levelling because it exhibited minimal structures of power. The idea of third places as levellers sits well alongside that of neutral ground and this was certainly the case at the Falls.

The process of levelling relates to the removal of rank and status where everyone is equal. The third place, as a leveller, is an inclusive place where day-to-day uniforms are left at the door (Oldenburg, 1999). It is an equaliser (Slater and Koo, 2010). The Falls creates a context where, in the main, all-comers were welcomed and treated equally. Status was removed and everyone was a potential Falls Friend. Power and privilege in their common understanding were left at the door. The Falls brings people from diverse backgrounds; this is affirmed in the words of one survey respondent (2011) who noted: "I have enjoyed the Falls, the friendships it brings and the different sub-cultures it attracts. It's very multi-cultural." Pegg and Patterson's study of a country music festival found the same in that attendees were "not found

to be a homogenous group of people” (2010, p. 97). Lola (focus group seventeen 2010) said that the Falls was “not so homogenous”.

Levelling also relates to a “delight in the novelty of their character” (Oldenburg, 1999, p. 26). As discussed in the social capital section of this chapter, at the Falls there existed tolerance and respect. These norms assisted attendees to feel safe to be themselves and express their own image as data from the Falls illustrated.

These findings contrast with the view of social capital expressed by Bourdieu (1986) who argues that power plays a role in social capital development. The expression of social capital identified at the Falls exhibited a more horizontal structure without the need for power dominance. Putnam’s (1995) and Coleman’s (1988) views of social capital have been criticised for their lack of power structures (Gauntlett, 2011a). The data in this study suggests power is not essential but the self-regulation and peer pressure evidenced at the Falls are important.

#### ***6.4.2 Conversations and the Regulars***

An important characteristic identified by Oldenburg centred on the role of conversation. Creating conversation affords information flows which, in turn, foster social capital. The Falls creates a context where conversation and the sharing of information are easy; making social capital easier to develop. While first-time attendees predominantly indicated that they came to the Falls for the music, those who attended more than once shifted towards social interaction. As people increasingly identify with third places they become more social. This feature is reflected at the Falls. As Oldenburg and Brisset (1982, p. 273) state, “it appears that continuous involvement [in a third place] does provide individuals with a realm of social experiences and relationships that are increasingly unavailable in the society at large”.



Hauser et al. (2007, p. 76) suggest that “physical proximity is the necessary prerequisite for continuous and meaningful social interaction”. Third places afford this. It was very easy to meet people at the Falls. Further, as one enters the third place they “may chance to meet the friend of a friend” (Oldenburg and Brissett, 1982, p. 275). Many participants at the Falls advised that they met new people through friends of friends and used that phrase to describe the phenomenon. The data revealed many examples of how people met people through a friend of a friend and participants used the term friend of a friend to describe those interactions. More than half of the Falls survey participants indicated they had met people and made friends without often intending to do so. As described previously, a Falls attendee argued that it was “just talkin’ to people ... just meeting new people I suppose. That’s what it’s all about isn’t it?” Conversations with strangers happened with ease because “you can have a chat with anyone pretty much”. Even if the discussions yielded limited information they were appreciated and welcomed. Social capital was still formed through this process. Regular Falls attendees anticipated this social interaction such that the Falls could be described as a re-bonding space. This study suggests that third places are a conduit for this.

Warde et al. (2005) note secondary associations such as friends and acquaintances outside of the household. Van Ingen and Van Eijck (2009, p. 194) suggest that “within these secondary associations, people may hear opinions different from their own and interact with persons from diverse social backgrounds”. This was generally welcomed by Falls attendees. They related how they enjoyed learning about other people’s lives. Shannon from focus group nine (2010) buoyantly summed this up:

It’s fun to watch the people ... You’ve got a mass group of different ... social structures right there. You can just watch them all. It’s entertaining and the music’s just the soundtrack.

Shannon noticed, as did others, the social conversations that were occurring within diverse cultural backgrounds.

The role of time has already been identified as important in that living on-site at a three-day festival enabled time to spend socialising and the identification of a home base for refuge. Arguably, this was why a majority of survey respondents indicated that a three-day festival was more social. Time and frequency of interaction played a significant role in creating conversation. The physical proximity to others compounded this. The desire for some attendees to remain in their camps for considerable lengths of time pointed to the value of third place in the social lives of attendees. This also strengthens opportunities for fostering social capital. For some, the Falls was not all about the music in that the Falls was also a place of bonding, meeting and conversation. This was especially so in 'tent city' where many of the social networks were built.

Oldenburg (1999) is bemused as to why publicans, as managers of third places, would play loud music in their venues that made conversation not enjoyable. He suggests that this makes people drink more and converse less. Perhaps, as this study has shown, the campsites assist those who wished to converse to do so in a more quiet location and take the time to engage? This affords some campers with what was asserted as the 'best of both worlds' where they could enjoy the conversations with their friends while listening to the music in the background.

If conversation is the main activity of a third place then hanging out in campsites for conversation, which was especially common during the daylight hours, affords further evidence of the Falls being a third place. It was the spontaneous social interactivity in all its forms (for example: when camping, when seeing bands and when buying food) that the Falls affords that strengthens the identification of the Falls as a third place and a place to create, build and strengthen social capital.

Another of the distinctive characteristics identified by Oldenburg is the existence of the *regular*. Regulars are the people, or types of people, that one would expect to bump into within a third place (Oldenburg, 1999). The regulars are identified in this

thesis as integral actors for fostering social capital. They are connectors and place-based actors. They are weak ties that strengthen through repeated use of space.

The identification of the Falls regular is subtle. A Falls Friend is one of Oldenburg's regulars as one expects that they will be there in the third place. Similar types of regulars exist at other festivals – for example, *Folkies* at folk festivals (Begg, 2011), *Ravers* at a bush doof<sup>66</sup> (Gibson and Connell, 2012), *Goths* at Gothic events (Spracklen and Spracklen, 2012) and *Headbangers* at a heavy metal concert (Weinstein, 2000). Frequency of attendance at the Falls helped build a network of regulars which correlates with Granovetter's (1973) suggestion of frequency playing a role in weak tie strength.

According to Oldenburg (1999, p. 37), the regulars “do not go home and dress up” and will be given “a good bit of ribbing” if they are overdressed. This was evidenced at the Falls. On the flipside, Oldenburg also suggests that keeping a low profile, personally, discourages pretentiousness. This was not evidenced at the Falls. The idea of pretentiousness was used by Falls attendees to describe other festivals, not the Falls. Participants in the study believed that at the Falls one could be who one wanted to be and that it was not pretentious to do so. One did not need to “try hard”<sup>67</sup> to be a member of the Falls community. Oldenburg puts forward that “where there is the slightest bit of fanfare, people become self-conscious” (1999, p. 37). It was normal to “be yourself” in whatever way one personally defined that to be and to be tolerant of those who were different. Dressing up to “look good” rather than dressing up to fit the vibe was seen as pretentious. The regulars understood this and, in most cases, it was welcomed.

The existence of Randoms (paradoxically another type of regular) is also expected at the Falls. Randoms facilitate connection – so the “regular” *modus operandi* of the

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<sup>66</sup> A bush doof is “a dance rave party that’s set in a rural location where revellers camp and the djs keep music playing all day and all night” (see Fisher, 2012).

<sup>67</sup> To “try hard” is to ‘dress to impress’. Trying hard was seen as a negative to the vibe of the Falls.

Random is integral to the development of weak ties. For newcomers the existence of Randoms who might become Falls Friends was a welcome surprise. It is like the old saying that “a stranger is just a friend you haven’t met yet”. An interesting component of the Falls phenomenon is that there is no stranger per se; or, at least, they are not specifically named as a stranger at the Falls. They are a Random.

Oldenburg (1999, p. 35) states that “the third place gang need only know that a newcomer is a decent sort” to be accepted into the fold and that “this kind of trust grows with each visit”. A Falls attendee was generally considered “a decent sort”. Given that there was the existence of a series of norms at the Falls, the “decent sort” was, in the main, a perpetuated activity. Even if one were not “a decent sort” the norms guided what a person should act like to become what Falls goers would consider to be “a decent sort”.

#### **6.4.3 A Low Profile versus A Playful Mood**

Oldenburg argues that third places have a low profile. Low profile refers to the venue as being typically plain and that fanfare can lead to self-consciousness and inhibition (Oldenburg, 1999). Understandably, Oldenburg’s concern with the low profile relates to the building of elegant facilities with the expectation that people will make them a home. He imparts that third places are more subtle and plain and “likely *not* to impress the uninitiated” (Oldenburg, 1999, p. 36).<sup>68</sup> They often do not resemble middle-class expectations of modernity and cleanliness. It is older places that are more likely to resemble third places: “Most third places are older structures originally built for other purposes” (Urban Enthusiast, 2012). In contrast, the Falls is not old in the frame of traditional third places but the location itself is old. The Falls was ‘built’ on farmland. It is located on an older ‘structure’ (a farm) that was originally built for another purpose. It has retained its farmland feel.

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<sup>68</sup> Emphasis by Oldenburg (1999).

However, the Falls does contest third place theory in regard to low profile. As an event and as a venue, the Falls does not have a low profile. It is known nationally and internationally given that approximately half of the attendees are from mainland Australia or from overseas. Yet, as a place it exhibits features often seen as characteristic of low profile – particularly in regard to coast, bush and landscape. It is natural and not overdeveloped. Some come to the Falls because of that – to observe and/or to enjoy the natural surroundings as well as interact and play. For some it can provide all these things at different times. This is not dissimilar to a third place in that some people interact and some soak up the atmosphere. The Falls exhibits characteristics of a third place while still maintaining a high profile.

The question this raises is why a contemporary third place needs a low profile. Findings in this research align more with those of Slater and Koo (2010) in that it appears that contemporary third places are more identified with image and comfort rather than a low profile. Slater and Koo's (2010) study into arts venues as potential new third places found that their findings resonated with the four criteria of a successful public place as described by the Project for Public Spaces (2013). The Project for Public Spaces criterion around this is called 'Image and Comfort' where they argue that "whether a space is comfortable and presents itself well – has a good image – is key to its success".

Data analysed indicates that the Falls does have a good image and is comfortable for attendees. The Falls is typically plain, relative to the Tasmanian landscape, when looking at it from the outside but it comes to life through the activity of the people who attend. Arguably, it is less about the low profile and more about the intended activity that the space facilitates that gives the Falls a place third place feel.

Third places "do not have policies that prohibit lingering" (Urban Enthusiast, 2012). Oldenburg (1999) propounds that third places encourage lingering in space. Lingering at the Falls was encouraged via campsite visits and conversations. It was a place of respite, fun and comfort that was rife with conversation and activity on

neutral ground. The mood appeared playful even when hibernating in one's campsite. These observations are consistent with the premise that the basic social nature of a third place is "for one to be happy, others must be happy too" (Oldenburg, 1999, p. 104).

Oldenburg (1999, p. 26) argues that "nothing more clearly indicates a third place than that the talk is good; that it is lively, scintillating, colorful, and engaging". Respondents to the surveys and interviews overwhelmingly described the fun that occurred in "the camps" and the happiness that it brought. They enjoyed meeting new and interesting people and re-bonding with existing friends. The talk was good for them and was conducted in a friendly, fun and engaging manner. Cultural expression encouraged conversation while at the Falls. Examples of costuming stimulated reactions to assist the friendly atmosphere and the personal interactions with others.

#### ***6.4.4 Accommodation and Accessibility in a Home Away From Home***

Third places are accessible to people when open and it is known that the regulars will be there (Oldenburg, 1999). The Falls is only accessible for a period of three days a year by those who have sought it out and paid for their entry ticket. It is a temporary space. The Project for Public Spaces (2013) assert that a "successful public space is easy to get to and get through". The Falls is not easy to get to. It takes planning, time and money. A ticket to attend the Falls costs in excess of \$AUD200. This, however, does not conflict with Oldenburg's theory in that a majority of third places are commodified spaces such as hair salons, cafés and bars. Just because some people may be excluded does not dismiss it as a third place. These commodified spaces are still accessible for those who wish to pay. In the context of the Falls, for some the event was an investment in their own wellbeing and not necessarily a burden. They planned ahead to make sure that it was accessible.

The Falls also brings attention to another perspective on accessibility. For a temporary period the Falls is a small city (or a large town). Within this temporary city is a series of streets, housing estates, public open space and activities, as one would expect to see in most towns. Once established, all locations are easily accessible; the Falls is 'built' on a relatively small site with all people living in close proximity to each other. 'Houses' such as tents and caravans have, in effect, no backyard so most of the land operates as commons (see Ostrom, 1990) with no individual ownership. The internal organisation (like Oldenburg's third places) facilitates interaction and it is accessible to all.

One of the most telling factors of the Falls being a third place was the consistent reference to feeling at home or being in a home away from home. In order for people to feel free to be themselves in a public space, they must derive an atmosphere that feels like home (Oldenburg, 1999). The participants, particularly those who had attended the Falls more than once, strongly suggested that the Falls was a home for them, not just an event. They made the venue (the tent) into another home. Some like Von (focus group sixteen 2010) had not even looked at the music line-up before they attended the event – for example: "I didn't even look at the line-up before I came. Just come here for the atmosphere. It's always good." It was the house party in their own lounge room with live bands performing in it.

The impact of time spent at the Falls and the frequency of interactions within these time frames were determining factors in maximising feelings of being at home. Repeated visits to the Falls shifted the festival experience toward a social activity and a third home rather than specifically a music event. It was a community – built on social capital. The event organisers create the context but the participants create the community. With homeliness came familiarity with the space and with familiarity came homeliness. The different became familiar. Vanessa (interview four 2011) provides an example:

I remember my first Falls was amazing. I had the best time. I guess it was all new at that stage so I was really, you know, shocked by how great it was ... but after that you just become accustomed to what, you know, you are going to be getting.

Not only was the Falls considered a home but the concept was strengthened through residing on-site. The camping area was integral to home identification. The camping area was a place for re-bonding, cultural expression and the building of a unique community. In this regard, there did appear to be a tension between the Main Arena as the focal point of the event and the camping area. Campers often felt that the camping area was also part of the Falls and not just a required off-shoot to the Main Arena. There was a sense that this area was as important as the Main Arena. For example, numerous people had not been to the Main Arena by day three but had sat back and enjoyed the time with their friends and listened to the music. They had the 'best of both worlds'. For example (Jackie – focus group thirteen 2010):

Sometimes when we want to be down here [in the camping area] socialising, it'd be great to also have a view of what's going on up near the stage. So that'd be great as well.

There was a longing by some to return to their Falls home albeit they could not describe why. An excerpt from a telling conversation between Vanessa and Sarah (interview four 2011), regular attendees of the Falls, brings this insight to the fore:

Vanessa – [The Falls in Marion Bay is] something me and my friends look forward to for most of the year ... it's just as a way to, yeah I guess, bring in the New Year and it's just something that's ... ear marked on the calendar as ... you know, I'm not sure what the correct term would be but it's sort of like a land mark on our, on our, calendar.

Sarah – Yeah a bit of a ritual I think to come down every year and I don't think I would feel the same if we didn't come. Just I can't put my finger on why.



Vanessa – That's right. We get disappointed. Well not disappointed but I've got a couple of friends that, you know, have pulled out this year and it's sort of, it's almost like a bit of a letdown, you know.

In common with other participants in the study, Vanessa and Sarah found it a hard concept to explain and they found it hard to understand why they longed to return. As another who attended mused: "For three days, in the often sun-drenched and occasionally stormy, but always beautiful, Marion Bay, Falls was home. It still feels like home" (Lachy, 2010).

According to Oldenburg and Brissett (1982, p. 268), "The 'escape theme' is common, in discussions of the third place, permeating descriptions of the tavern and the coffee houses in novels, documentaries, travelogues, and community case studies". The Falls was a place to escape to. It was described as a place to get away from day-to-day life. This may have been the case but for the regulars it also held the safety, comforts and activities that they desired of another home.

### ***6.4.5 Is the Falls a Third Place?***

The Falls is a comfortable space where people can feel content, relaxed and relatively free to be themselves. The Falls does not specifically meet all of Oldenburg's criteria as they are explained (for example: low profile and accessibility) but appears to be a third place nonetheless. The essence of third place theory is there. The Falls is accessible to those who seek it, it has its own unique combination of attributes that is welcomed by members, it is very social in nature and has activities that are sought after. This research has shown that third place theory does provide interesting insight for the scoping of informal leisure contexts.

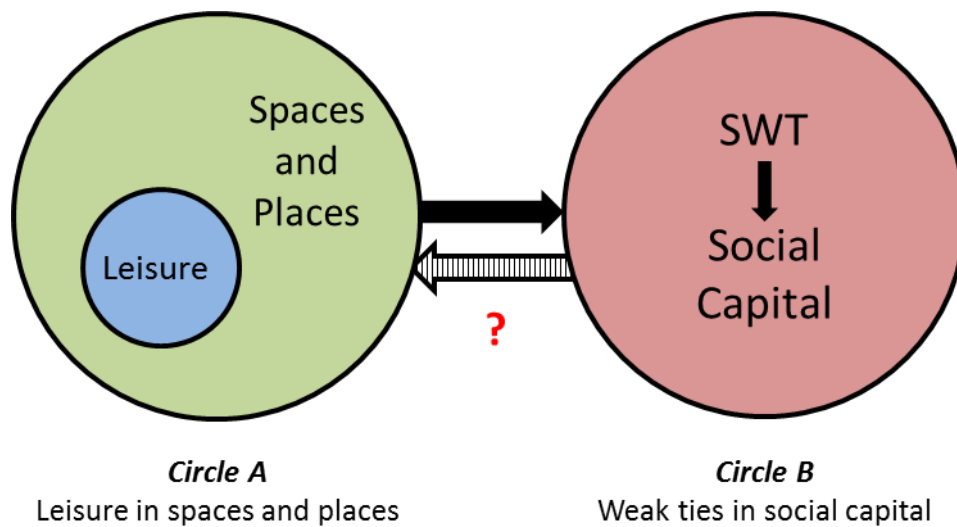
The concept of a third place has been traditionally focussed on smaller, urban spaces such as cafés and libraries (Oldenburg, 1999). This research elicits that this is not an essential component. A larger venue can still contain ingredients required for third

place identification. A temporary venue can also do this. This research adds weight to recent studies into new third places such as the on-line environment (for example: Baker-Eveleth et al., 2005, Soukup, 2006, Moore et al., 2009, Foster, 2013), attendance at cultural and sporting venues (for example: Jacke, 2009, Mair, 2009, Slater and Koo, 2010), public leisure spaces (for example: Maynard and Kleiber, 2005), community markets (for example: Tiemann, 2008), health intervention (for example: Glover and Parry, 2009) and housing estates (for example: Williams and Pocock, 2009).

### **6.5 Social Leisure Places: A New Platform**

This study has looked at the emergence of more informal forms of leisure in contemporary society and examining if and how social capital is fostered. A specific concern has been to ask if these kinds of contexts exhibit indicators of third places and how they might foster social capital. In addition the study explores why a lens on weak ties might better explain how social capital is created in contemporary society.

As discussed in chapter two, the aim of the research is not to challenge theories but to configure them to guide an exploration of what occurs 'on the ground' in an informal leisure context. Figure 6 drew these components together as a framework for the research as well as articulated a foundation to inform policy and practice. While the diagram is simplistic, it is designed to broadly visualise the framework. In response to these ideas, a contemporary music festival – the Falls – was selected as an appropriate case to explore these questions. This study has demonstrated that Circle A can assist to accumulate and extract social capital and that the theory of SWT can afford an understanding of contemporary social capital. It also demonstrates that Circle B can inform the practitioner and the policy maker how to better facilitate leisure services and venues into the future.



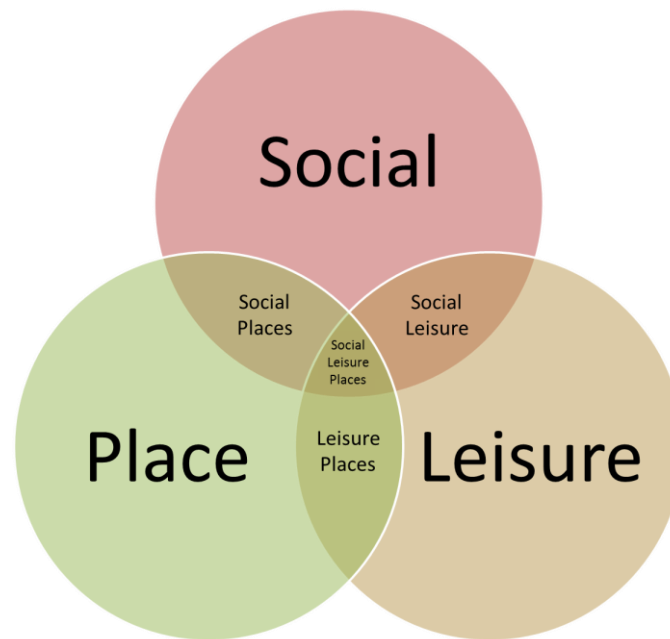
**Figure 6 Revisited – Research Framework with Insights for the Practitioner**

This thesis turns now to consider the value of conceptualising a social leisure place as a platform. A social leisure place is characterised as a context for the accumulation and extraction of social capital. It is a platform to facilitate weak ties as they are time and context dependent (Granovetter, 1973, 1983).

### **6.5.1 Social Leisure Places: The Platform**

The *social leisure places* platform (see Figure 19) is a way of visualising the findings of this research. Although it appears simplistic, it can be a framework for assisting the practitioner and the policy maker into the future. Social connectivity and informal leisure are ingredients for the fostering of social capital in place. Social leisure places are a context to facilitate the accumulation and extraction of social capital. The existence of the three distinct, yet interdependent, ‘vibes’ associated with people, activity and place are supported by the findings of the case study. The three vibes of the people, the place and the activity (the festival) are strong representations of the social, place and leisure components of this platform. All three concentric circles can operate independently of each other. Social connectivity can exist outside of leisure activities and place characteristics (for example: working lunches). Leisure activities

can occur without place characteristics and social networking (for example: sitting alone at the bus stop). Place characteristics can be identified outside of leisure and social activity (for example: working in a forest alone).



**Figure 19 – Social Leisure Places Platform**

This platform has a stronger explanatory power than the core concepts on their own. For example, a *social leisure* activity might be a having lunch with friends in a random coffee shop. Workplaces can be *social places* without the existence of leisure activity. There can exist social networking and a sense of home (Oldenburg's second place) in the workplace. Similarly, leisure activity with place identification can occur without social interaction, making the *leisure places* component of the platform. Ultimately, however, a focus on the interaction between all three in this study demonstrated it was a potent and useful conceptual space within which to examine the creation of social capital in contemporary society. The sum of the three components can stimulate social capital.

According to Glover and Hemingway (2005, p. 397), “The creation and maintenance of social capital depends on the creation and maintenance of social ties”. A social leisure place is a context to create and maintain social capital as it does facilitate the maintenance of social ties. Not only can a social leisure place maintain existing ties but also can strengthen them and even establish new ties. They are places to meet a friend of a friend. They may even make a *place friend* – a person only known within the space where the place characteristics encouraged the meeting. Time and frequency are integral to the success of social leisure place in building social ties and ‘home’ identification (a feature of both social capital and third place theories).

It is the concept of social leisure places that provides a platform to rethink where and how social capital in contemporary society is created. A social leisure place is more than social networking. It is more than being a third place and it is more than a leisure activity. A social leisure place, as a platform, is a new concept. It is the sum of the parts that interact.

### **6.5.2 The Falls as a Social Leisure Place**

The three vibes identified at the Falls centred on people that attend the Falls, the characteristics of the venue and the festival activities. These three vibes observed at the Falls reflect the social ties, place and leisure theoretical components of the platform respectively. Importantly, it was the interaction between the vibes that created the Falls experience.

The identification and the interaction of these vibes at the Falls positions the Falls as a social leisure place. There were three distinct, yet intertwined, vibes that focussed on the activity, the people and the place. This finding resonates with those of Pegg and Patterson (2010, p. 96) in their study of the Tamworth Country Music Festival,

The “atmosphere” was also an overarching theme from the respondents; that is, the vibe, the energy and the family-friendly atmosphere were noted, as was the sense of being able to meet new and friendly people. People commented on the casual and relaxed atmosphere, the very positive upbeat vibe, the carnival feeling, the country music atmosphere, and the family feeling of the entire event.

Even though Pegg and Patterson did not articulate it as three vibes, in the above quote there is evidence of the type of people, the place (the “country”) and the festival vibe. The evidence of these three vibes, or components of the social leisure places platform, further justifies the Falls as a social leisure place.

These places can offer participants a break away from their usual lives and open up opportunities for the chance meeting of a friend or new friend. Music may be part of the incentive to return but, as expressed earlier, is only the backdrop to a broader phenomenon. It appears that the music may come second to the carefree, friendly atmosphere that offers respite, activity and social interactions beneficial to individuals. The integral atmosphere component of a festival is a key finding in other studies looking at the experiences of festival goers (for example: Bowen and Daniels, 2005, Pegg and Patterson, 2010, Packer and Ballantyne, 2011, Gibson and Connell, 2012). This may be at the core of outdoor festivals as they can give participants lasting experiences that contribute to wellbeing they can take away with them and retain until next time.

The Falls creates a social leisure place where people can easily tap into networks. The Falls was described by some participants as a place where one can easily meet new friends such as Falls Friends or re-meet old friends. More than half of the Falls survey participants indicated they had met people and made friends often without intending to do so. Social capital can occur through events of this kind (Deery and Jago, 2010) and it has “the potential of being maintained far beyond the short life of the festival” (Arcodia and Whitford, 2006, p. 11). Social leisure places are contexts of meeting where one can create and strengthen relationships. In an Australian

context, this characteristic resonates closely with similar findings in a camping study by Foley and Hayllar (2007) and festival studies by Gibson and Connell (2012). People can feel at home sufficiently within these spaces to be themselves.

The social interactions within a social leisure place like the Falls can build norms and foster trust with others (characteristics of social capital, for example: Putnam, 1995). At the Falls, people's attitudes seemed to align in this social leisure place and this social awareness was illustrated by "random acts of kindness". Similarly, these acts align with Oldenburg's (1999) commended stranger. These commended strangers can be met in third places and emit a spiritual tonic that one derives in the place by making other people's day. This is human sociability where Simmel (1971 in Oldenburg, 1999) imparts that both parties give and receive "joy, vivacity and relief" (p.55). Moreover, this spiritual tonic stays with people for a long time after the event, urging them to return again for more similar experiences. At the Falls these incidental meetings can develop levels of trust, reciprocity, tolerance and awareness of others. As people treat this space as theirs, collectively they will not let outsiders spoil it. There appeared to be unwritten rules as to how to behave but it was clear that people knew them, especially the regulars.

It is the people that use contexts like these for vital social connection or reconnection that guide the creation of third places (Oldenburg, 1999). Festivals facilitate a connection between attendees (Packer and Ballantyne, 2011). The Falls may only operate in a temporary space but the experiences had in that space can have lasting effects on the wellbeing of the temporary inhabitants. The anticipation of returning to the space, to take time out from everyday life and to recreate and recapture the experience (Oldenburg, 1999) evidently encourages third place qualities and the creation of a social leisure place. As the Falls case study elucidates, people derive benefits of social inclusion and interaction both individually and collectively. They appreciate a welcome break from routine and they know that the beneficial sensation can last, albeit dwindling, until they return for a top-up. There is an evident longing to return. One survey respondent (2011) put it simply as "really

glad to be back”. The Falls is a cultural festival event that is social in nature. It encourages a building of a sense of place and displays third place characteristics.

People can feel at home in these contexts sufficiently to be themselves. The social interactions within the festival space built trust and norms with others as well as shared memories and experiences. Attendees often achieved a sense of belonging through shared experiences which reflects the findings of the music festival research of Packer and Ballantyne (2011). In reference to the work of Appadurai (1990), Whiteley et al. (2004, p. 3) state that “such are the global flows of people and ‘culture’ that contemporary urban spaces are most effectively conceptualized as ethnoscapescapes”. These ‘mini-scapes’ can service localities of small, yet, distinct cultures (Smith, 1999). Festivals like the Falls bring a mix of people together into a micro-ethnoscape that enables a break from the norm whilst affording a blend of social and cultural experiences to those that attend. These spaces can invoke the feeling of a collective comfortable home for everyone but it is the novelty of being able to relax, chat, dance or just watch together that contributes to the creation of the third place. Everyone is an individual but within an almost collective consciousness. These ‘scapes’ are important for fostering of social capital in contemporary society. The Falls engages in this mix through fun and conversation. It was a hive of activity with much social activity and playful enjoyment which, in turn, can foster social capital.



# **Informal Leisure as a Source of Social Capital Formation: *A Festival Case Study***

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## **7. Insights for the Practitioner's Dilemma**

## 7.1 Introduction

Stocks and flows of social capital are changing their form. Society is arguably cocooning itself and its means of communication have significantly diversified (for example: social media). However, people still want more social connections (Putnam radio interview with Panichi, 2011).

This research illustrates insights into the important role that informal leisure contexts can play in fostering contemporary social capital. The Falls study is a thorough exploration of contemporary social capital and approaches to build social capital into the future. The research further elucidates insights into how leisure, specifically informal leisure, and place characteristics might foster and enable the creation of social capital. These findings add to the body of knowledge on social capital, leisure and place and their roles in a twenty-first century society as well as provide learnings of value to the practitioner and the policy maker. This latter concern arises from an interest by the researcher in the role of local government in developing inclusive and supportive local communities.

This chapter draws these two aims together. The first contribution to the body of knowledge is that social leisure places are contexts where social capital can be created and leveraged in contemporary society. The second contribution is that the research undertaken around bridging, bonding and linking social capital is still relevant despite the changing landscape. However, a critical conclusion to this is that it needs to be stretched to accommodate contexts and approaches to strengthening social ties, not just the identification of bridges, bonds and links. The research has shown the value which can be extracted by looking at the strength of ties between individuals rather than simply the quantity of ties between groups. It points to a reconfiguring of social capital.

## 7.2 Research Question Revisited

This thesis asked the following question: *Do informal leisure contexts build contemporary social networks and, subsequently, social capital?* The findings of this research indicate that the answer is yes but as long as the right characteristics are there. The study of the Falls shows that leisure can be a fertile arena to harness social networks. There is a strong link between leisure and social ties and they can be leveraged off one another to stimulate productive social capital. This research provides new insights which help close the gaps between social capital and leisure studies.

An examination of and focus on informal leisure contexts affords an opportunity to utilise concepts of third place. This research supports the work of Stokowski (2002) as the Falls was a place of social construction as well as the work of Memmott and Long (2002) who argue that place properties are transmitted socially. In this research, the unique setting of the Falls was often transmitted socially by attendees and the properties of the place were also often reflected in the people themselves. This finding is important because, as Schuller (2007, p. 24) suggests, social capital “may be as much about creating appropriate contexts and environments as about direct support for networks”. The investigation of the Falls as both an informal leisure context and a third place suggests that informal leisure contexts that display the essence of third place can accumulate and extract social capital. Oldenburg (1996) argues that third places are vanishing. This thesis suggests that the essence of third place is located in other spaces and not just the traditional third places scoped by Oldenburg.

Social capital is a means to establish social networks and social norms (for example: Fukuyama, 1999, Putnam, 2000, OECD, 2001a, Schuller, 2007). Social capital is a collective good (Putnam, 1993), is productive (Coleman, 1988) and helps people get ahead (Weller, 2006). It embeds resources that allow information to flow, provide a

context for influence to be exerted, afford social credentials and reinforce identity and recognition (Lin, 2001). This study supports the value of social capital and that it is important for social, economic and cultural development. It can be productive and it has value. Within the discussion on social capital, the study reveals an argument underpinning this research that Granovetter's (1973, 1983) SWT theory is useful to understanding contemporary forms of social capital. This is especially the case when exploring how to strengthen social ties.

Social capital is best researched over time (Schuller, 2007). This study shows this premise to be a truism in the fostering of social capital at the Falls. Time was a critical factor in fostering social capital. The three elements of the social leisure places platform – the mix of actors, leisure activity and place characteristics – are essential ingredients but they need time to blend and be leveraged. Time strengthens ties and linkages and this study found that the strength of ties is as important as, if not more important than, the amount of ties. This research does, however, raise the issue of the 'quality' of these ties as they can dissipate quickly. While the research does illustrate evidence of social capital being traded in, a further study into comparing the quality of the interactions in different contexts (or comparing traditional contexts with emerging contexts) may afford a clearer picture. The quality variable was not a focus within this study.

This research has found that social capital stimulated through weak ties can be of productive value to the Falls members and beyond their circles. Granovetter's (1973, 1983) SWT theory is an appropriate theoretical base to better understand this contemporary social capital given the looser affiliations that people are experiencing. Weak ties in informal leisure contexts have the potential to rapidly strengthen social networks and provide productive social capital value to communities; however, they can dissipate quickly if not frequently maintained. This research also argues that the Falls may actually display a new form, or at least a reconfiguration, of social capital that adds spatial context and activity to social capital conceptualisation. It informs social capital theory by adding strength to the bonding, bridging and linking concepts

(for example: Putnam, 1995, Woolcock, 2001) while conceptualising new social actors. This form of social capital is a complex, place-based dynamic that hosts two identified social actors – namely, the Random and the place friend – in addition to traditional actors such as the friend and the friend of a friend. Third place theory has assisted to elucidate these spatial findings meaning that third place theory can inform social capital and SWT theories. It also informs the future of leisure research in that place-based activities can create a unique series of vibes for social interaction and wellbeing.

Social media was found to be a crucial element in continuing on social bonds beyond the use of the physical space. It created a virtual representation of the space to enable actors to continue the social ties. It was considered a less-intrusive approach to strengthening social ties in a 'cocooned' (Blackshaw and Long, 2005, Oldenburg, 2001b, Thibault, 2008, Park, 2009), more individual-orientated (Bauman, 2001) society. This demonstrates the positive side of social media as a conduit to maintaining and strengthening friendships.

Lastly, this thesis has responded to calls for a greater understanding of, at least, the following:

- The changing nature of leisure, social capital and third place (for example: Oldenburg, 1996, Cushman et al., 2005, Warde et al., 2005, Crouch, 2006, Blackshaw and Crawford, 2009, Jacke, 2009).
- Bringing together the leisure and social capital literatures (for example: Blackshaw and Long, 2005, Glover and Hemingway, 2005, Glover, 2006).
- A return to Granovetter's (1973, 1983) work on the SWT (for example: Law and Mooney, 2006).
- Potential new forms of social capital (for example: Schuller, 2007).
- Identifying new and/or re-evaluating existing contexts for fostering social capital (for example: NESF, 2003, Glover et al., 2005).

- The intersection between third place and social capital (for example: Soukup, 2006, Foster, 2013).
- Identifying new types of third places (for example: Slater and Koo, 2010).
- The role of festivals in fostering social capital (for example: Arcodia and Whitford, 2006).

### **7.3 A Practitioner's Dilemma Revisited and Future Research**

Over 600 delegates attended the 2013 Local Government Managers Australia (LGMA) National Congress. There was overwhelming recognition that social capital enables the building of societies and that local government is at the coal face to engage in this (LG Manager, 2013). According to Queensland's Department of Infrastructure and Planning (2010), there is a change happening in local government:

Traditionally, councils have provided services like roads, water supply and sewerage, but increasingly councils are now involved in the social, economic and cultural development of their communities and in improving local living environments.

As explained in the introductory chapter, the researcher was a practitioner in local government in community and cultural development and recreation planning roles. There was limited data to assist this practitioner to navigate the changing nature of society and the way people were using leisure spaces. This questioned how to best support both traditional and emerging leisure activities of both formal and informal natures and created what was described earlier as a practitioner's dilemma. The dilemma was three-fold:

1. What are the impacts on communities of this change in leisure participation?
2. What data could usefully inform better decision-making around leisure-based services and the dynamic societal changes taking place?
3. How might the policy makers and practitioners facilitate leisure-based services into the future?

While this thesis does not provide all of the answers to the questions stated above, it does provide valuable insight.

In response to question one, there are numerous impacts on communities of the changing nature of leisure participation – both positive and negative. In addition to the obvious health benefits of leisure activity into which this research provides some insight (for example: mental health outcomes), the literature review in this thesis spells out the social impacts of an increase in informal leisure activity. A more individual-orientated society might mean an impact on civic engagement as traditionally recognised (for example: participation in community groups). It might mean a breaking of traditional networks; however this research has shown that informal leisure contexts are important in the creation of new social ties and maintenance of existing ones. While traditional social structures are being challenged, new structures are emerging. In addition, the policy potential of social media should not be underestimated. The value of social media to continued engagement in a virtual representation of spaces and places can be productive in the accumulation and extraction of social capital. Research into population cohorts beyond generations X and Y and into the ‘dark side’ of social capital (see Glover and Hemingway, 2005) may provide further insight into the impacts of the changing participatory environment around leisure.

Question two seeks better data to inform decision-making. The NESF (2003, p. 115) propose that the “policy potential [of social capital] should relate to, and reflect, the specific local context”. This research has found that contextual data can assist to make more informed decisions. This thesis identified a context (the Falls) to examine

as a case study of contemporary leisure enacted in a social space. This context provided both quantitative and qualitative data. While the validation of findings against results observed in other contexts was outside the scope of this thesis, data on place characteristics, leisure activity and the creation and maintenance of social ties provides insight into how the practitioner (and the policy maker) can maximise benefits accrued through informal leisure. It is increasingly acknowledged now that leisure does have an important role to play as it “provides leadership opportunities that BUILD STRONG COMMUNITIES” (Marriott, 2013, p. 152).<sup>69</sup>

Spaces that encourage informal leisure activity can be used as meeting spaces that facilitate social and cultural development and make people feel welcome. For example, the Falls creates a context where people can easily tap into social networks. These networks can afford access to resources that enable wealth and opportunity. Access to these resources can reduce social inequity and poverty meaning that events like the Falls, and the spaces in which they are played out, have a strategic role to play in the economic fabric of communities. Woolcock (2001, p. 5) states that “social capital has entered debates about economic performance on its ambitious claim to constituting an independent — and hitherto under-appreciated — factor of production”. This research has shown that this may not be an ambitious claim.

Ultimately, the author of this thesis – the practitioner – wanted the answer to question three. How might the policy makers and practitioners facilitate leisure-based services into the future? The thesis sees this question as a pathway for further research. However, some insight has been gained through this empirical research.

In a Tasmanian context, Russell (2013) recommends that local government should use spatial planning processes to assist with social inclusion. These “planning

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<sup>69</sup> Emphasis by Marriott (2013).



processes should include an assessment of social impact in their approvals process for major projects” (p. 43) and “create inclusive spaces where people and communities can connect” (p. 44). Informal leisure contexts can provide for social inclusion, as this research has uncovered, but place-based factors need to be considered to better facilitate a more unique leisure experience and increased wellbeing outcomes. This research draws attention to place factors as more than just spatial planning. Therefore, a place management approach is, arguably, more what is required. As discussed in chapter two, governments are adopting place management methodologies which “involves looking to, listening to and engaging the input of the people who live, work and play in a particular place to understand their needs and aspirations” (Metropolitan Local Government Review Panel, 2011). The Falls contained intangible aspects such as the vibes given off by people, the type of leisure activities conducted within the space and a sense of homeliness. It is these kinds of characteristics that need to be better understood at a local level to better facilitate leisure-based services. This research has uncovered why the Falls is what it is. It simply could not be transplanted elsewhere and retain its authenticity and vibe combination. Music festivals are a particular type of informal leisure context that is on the increase globally (see Gibson and Connell, 2012). Research into other informal leisure contexts may enable comparison with these findings to further assist the policy maker and the practitioner. Future research may also assist to identify which individuals in society benefit from informal leisure contexts.

The social leisure places platform can be a lens to examine how to facilitate the making of place friends through leisure activity. Policy makers and practitioners can look to better understand:

1. How people are using informal leisure contexts.
2. Who are the people that the contexts are attracting.
3. What are the characteristics of these contexts that afford a sense of home.

Oldenburg (1999, p. 23) argues that planners and social reformers ignore how important neutral ground is and the relationships, interactions and activities that occur there. Informal leisure contexts are often neutral ground whereas facilities utilised exclusively by groups are not. This research has shown that neutral ground is an important factor in the creation and maintenance of weak social ties and, subsequently, the accumulation and extraction of social capital.

If a meeting space such as the Falls can offer opportunities for the transfer of productive and valuable information through social connectivity then there is an opportunity here that needs further investigation for future policy innovation. The problem is that “social capital cannot be easily created or shaped by public policy” (Fukuyama, 2001, p. 7). Schuller (2007, p. 26) agrees: “It will be difficult to turn the insights from social capital analysis into specific policies”. However, the leisure practitioner and policy maker do have the mechanisms of planning processes in which to shape social capital. All of this points to the development of a policy framework that facilitates appropriate leisure planning, especially by local government entities, that is opportunity focussed and captures the potential, including social fabric, of its place to enhance liveability and build the ‘information flows’. It is an approach to constructing a social leisure places platform for local community prosperity. A focus on social capital by governments can “provide a useful framework for developing new policy responses” but it needs to “relate to, and reflect, the specific local context” (NESF, 2003, p. 115).

Importantly for the practitioner, “public spaces such as parks, village squares and other areas – cultivating places where people can spontaneously meet – are important for the creation and development of social capital” (NESF 2003, p. 108). This research accentuates that a shift in focus to these contexts of spontaneous meeting is beneficial for the future of social capital. The making of place friends can be facilitated in informal leisure contexts and repeated visits can strengthen these friendships. As argued by Beck (2009, p. 240), “High quality, well designed and managed parks and urban public spaces play a crucial role in promoting individual

well-being and contribute positive social, economic and environmental value to our towns and cities”.

## **7.4 Conclusion**

Foley and Edwards (1999, p. 141) asked the question, “Is it time to disinvest in social capital?”. This research shows the answer to be no but a better understanding of how it is constructed in contemporary society is what is needed. It is evident from the data collected that social connectivity does matter, seems to continue on following the use of the space, strengthens over time and is productive for participants and the wider community. Analysis of the data indicates that the Falls was not all about the music. It was also a place for re-bonding, cultural expression and the building of a unique community with its own norms and levels of trust. The Falls also afforded third place characteristics. There were strong indications that the role of technology for social networking (for example: mobile phones, social media and email) was a significant and integral factor in keeping people plugged in and communicating between use of the physical space, more than previously assumed by the researcher.

As discussed in chapter two, the leisure and social capital literatures still have a limited discourse. This thesis has attempted to bridge this gap. Soukup (2006) suggested that the concept of social capital may assist the development of Oldenburg's work on third places. This research found that it can. Social capital, leisure and third place literatures have a role in talking to each other for collective outcomes. The discourse should now be threefold. To make it fourfold, the focus of the SWT theory in the strengthening of ties is an appropriate lens through which to view contemporary social capital.

The value of informal leisure contexts for individuals and their communities may be greatly underestimated. The social benefits of such contexts can assist wellbeing,

social inclusion, sense of community, local economic development and social capital accumulation and extraction. In this modern, technological, fast-paced, increasingly individualised world, social leisure places can facilitate community connectivity and productivity into the future. More research needs to be conducted into other informal leisure contexts to elucidate further insight into their future possibilities for social capital.

# **Informal Leisure as a Source of Social Capital Formation: *A Festival Case Study***

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# **Informal Leisure as a Source of Social Capital Formation: *A Festival Case Study***

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## **9. Appendix 1 – 2010 Esurvey Tool**

## Welcome from 'Leisureman'

### WEAK TIES IN LEISURE: THE ROLE OF OUTDOOR MUSIC FESTIVALS

#### Invitation

You are invited to participate in a research study that seeks to obtain a better understanding of social interactions within informal leisure spaces. This study is being conducted in partial fulfillment of a PhD for Clayton Hawkins under the supervision of Professor David Adams and Professor Janelle Allison from the Institute for Regional Development at the Cradle Coast campus of the University of Tasmania (UTAS).

#### What is the purpose of this study?

The purpose is to investigate whether informal leisure spaces have a greater role to play in the development of social networks. The component of the study that you have been invited to participate in focuses on the role that outdoor music festivals play in the development of social networks and wellbeing.

#### Why have I been invited to participate in this study?

You have been invited as a subscriber to the emailing list of The Falls Music and Arts Festival. To be eligible you must be 18 years or older and have attended the 2010 Falls Music and Arts Festival at Marion Bay. You will not be able to be identified by this survey as names, addresses, contact details etc. are not sought with the exception of the optional providing of your email addresses to enter the prize draw.

#### What does this study involve?

The online survey should take approximately 15 minutes to complete. You will be asked non-identifiable questions in four sections. The first section focuses on your attendance at the Festival, the second section focuses on your day-to-day social interactions at the Festival, the third section is focussed on your wellbeing and the final section is a simple capture of basic demographic information (eg. gender, age).

You will be offered the opportunity to add an email address in the survey to enable you to enter a draw for entry passes to the 2011 Falls Music and Arts Festival. The offering of your email address is voluntary.

#### Are there any possible benefits from participation in this study?

It is possible that you will notice a greater interest in arts-based events in Tasmania after publication of results of this study. This may lead to more events, facilities and spaces and greater linkages between informal leisure facilities and activities. If we are able to take the findings of this study and link them with a future wider study into informal social networks in leisure, it may lead to a stronger emphasis on public policy and planning around contemporary leisure amenities.

#### Are there any possible risks from participation in this study?

There are no specific risks anticipated with participation in this study.

#### What if I have questions about this research?

If you would like to discuss any aspect of this study please feel free to contact the Institute for Regional Development on (03) 6430 4511 or via email at [IRD.Enquiries@utas.edu.au](mailto:IRD.Enquiries@utas.edu.au). We would be happy to discuss any aspect of the research with you.

This study has been approved by the Tasmanian Social Science Human Research Ethics Committee. If you have concerns or complaints about the conduct of this study should contact the Executive Officer of the HREC (Tasmania) Network on (03) 6226 7479 or email [human.ethics@utas.edu.au](mailto:human.ethics@utas.edu.au). The Executive Officer is the person nominated to receive complaints from research participants. You will need to quote H0011532.

Thank you for taking the time to fill out the survey. Your participation in the survey is considered the giving of consent to participate in the study.

## Eligibility Question One

### \* 1. Are you aged 18 or above?

☐ Yes

☐ No

Eligibility Question Two
<p><b>*2. Did you attend The Falls Music and Arts Festival in Marion Bay in 2010?</b></p> <p><input type="radio"/> Yes</p> <p><input type="radio"/> No</p>
Introductory Questions
<p>Time to start playing twenty questions</p> <p><b>*3. How many times have you attended The Falls Music and Arts Festival at Marion Bay?</b></p> <p><input type="radio"/> 2010 was my first Festival</p> <p><input type="radio"/> 2</p> <p><input type="radio"/> 3</p> <p><input type="radio"/> 4</p> <p><input type="radio"/> 5+</p> <p><input type="radio"/> Never</p> <p><b>*4. How did you find out about The Falls Music and Arts Festival? (you can choose more than one)</b></p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Television</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Official website of the event</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Newsletter</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Newspaper</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Radio</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Social media (e.g. Facebook, Twitter)</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> A friend</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> I've been before</p> <p>Other (please specify)</p> <div></div>
Introductory Questions

**\* 5. How many of your friends are friends with each other?**

- ☐ None  
☐ One or two  
☐ Some  
☐ Most  
☐ All  
☐ Don't know

**\* 6. How did you get to the Festival?**

- ☐ On your own  
☐ With friends who have been before  
☐ With friends who have never been before

Other (please specify)

**Introductory Questions**

**\* 7. Obviously you were motivated somehow to attend The Falls Music and Arts Festival in Marion Bay. Please rate the potential motivations below according to how much they influenced your decision to attend.**

	Yuck! This is a big turn-off	It's a bit of a downer in the motivation stakes	Slightly demotivated	Meht Neither motivated or not motivated	Slightly motivated	It's getting right up there in the motivation stakes	Rock on! 100% motivation	Don't know
To soak up the environment	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
To experience festival life	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
To catch up with friends	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
To enjoy the music	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
To watch your favourite band	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
To meet people	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
To bond with your close friends	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Because it's cool to go	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
To get away from day-to-day life	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Other (please specify)

**Social Interactions**

8. Please rate the following statements according to how much you agree or disagree with them								
	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Slightly disagree	Neither agree or disagree	Slightly agree	Agree	Strongly agree	Don't know
I feel welcome at The Falls Music and Arts Festival	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Most people at The Falls Music and Arts Festival are friendly	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I feel safe walking alone in the dark at The Falls Music and Arts Festival	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Most people at The Falls Music and Arts Festival can be trusted	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Most people at The Falls Music and Arts Festival are tolerant	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
If a stranger set up camp next to my campsite at The Falls Music and Arts Festival I would invite them over to my campsite for a chat	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I recycle rubbish at The Falls Music and Arts Festival on daily basis	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Social Interactions							
*9. Please rate your use of the following forms of communication							
	Never	Almost never	Sometimes	Almost daily	Daily	Don't know	
Face to face	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	
Mall/Fax	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	
Home phone	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	
Mobile phone (calling)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	
Mobile phone (texting)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	
Email	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	
Social media (e.g. Facebook, Twitter)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	
Online Instant messaging (e.g. ICQ, MSN)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	
Chat rooms	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	
Forums on websites	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	
Video conferencing (e.g. Skype)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	
Other (please specify)	<input type="text"/>						

Social Interactions - The Falls Music and Arts Festival
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**10. Did you experience any of the following either while at The Falls Music and Arts Festival or in the company of fellow Falls friends since?**

	At The Falls	Since The Falls
Met other people	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Found out about a potential job	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Joined, or was invited to join, a group	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Learned or strengthened a skill	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Undertook, or was inspired to undertake, further study	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Became motivated on an issue or for a cause	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Planned another time to 'meet'	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Made a new friend	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Another experience that you wish to pass on (please specify)

**11. If you wish, please offer examples of your experiences of the above?**

**Social Interactions - The Falls Music and Arts Festival**

**\*12. Since returning from The Falls Music and Arts Festival held in Marion Bay in 2010, have you communicated with people who attended The Falls Music and Arts Festival (this includes people you knew prior to The Falls Music and Arts Festival)?**

- ☐ Yes  
☐ No  
☐ Don't know

**Social Interactions - The Falls Music and Arts Festival**

**13. Please identify how you have communicated with those people (you can choose more than one)**

	People I knew before The Falls	People I met at The Falls
Face to face	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Mall/Fax	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Home phone	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Mobile phone (calling)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Mobile phone (texting)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Email	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Social media (e.g. Facebook, Twitter)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Online Instant messaging (e.g. ICQ, MSN)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Chat rooms	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Forums on websites	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Video conferencing (e.g. Skype)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Other (please specify)	<input type="text"/>	

**Social Interactions - The Falls Music and Arts Festival****14. Thinking about the people that you socialised with at The Falls Music and Arts Festival in 2010, how many of these have you been in contact with since?**

	People I knew before The Falls	People I met at The Falls
None	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
1	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
2	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
3-5	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
6-10	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
11-20	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
21-50	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
50+	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

**Social Participation - General Community**

**15. Do you participate in any of the leisure activities below?**

- ☐ Volunteer
- ☐ Play organised sport or recreation activities
- ☐ Have membership of a community organisation
- ☐ Play online gaming
- ☐ Use social media
- ☐ Attend organised social events
- ☐ Meet with friends face-to-face regularly
- ☐ Use public spaces to 'hang out'
- ☐ Don't know
- ☐ Other (please specify)

**Personal Wellbeing****16. Do you have friends to turn to for support?**

	Emotionally	Socially	Financially
Yes	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
No	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Don't know	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

**17. As a result of your attendance at The Falls Music and Arts Festival, do you feel closer to friends and/or have made new friends to receive support?**

	Emotionally	Socially	Financially
Yes	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
No	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Don't know	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

**Personal Wellbeing****18. Thinking about your time spent at The Falls Music and Arts Festival, please respond to the following statements**

	At no time	Some of the time	Less than half of the time	Half of the time	More than half of the time	Most of the time	All the time	Don't know
I felt cheerful and in good spirits	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I felt calm and relaxed	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I felt active and vigorous	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

**19. Thinking about your time spent since The Falls Music and Arts Festival, how much did your attendance at The Falls influence the following?**

	No Influence at all	A little Influence	Some Influence	Quite a lot of Influence	Total Influence	Don't know
Being cheerful and in good spirits	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Being calm and relaxed	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Being active and vigorous	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

**ASL!**

Now we simply move onto some basic questions about you to wrap up the survey

**\*20. Are you male or female?**

- ☐ Male  
☐ Female

**\*21. What is your age?**

- ☐ 18-19 ☐ 20-24 ☐ 25-29 ☐ 30-34 ☐ 35-39 ☐ 40-44 ☐ 45-49 ☐ 50-54 ☐ 54-59 ☐ 60+

**\*22. Please provide the postcode of your normal place of residence below**

Post Code:

**Nearly there...**

**\*23. What is your highest completed level of formal educational study?**

- ☐ Year 10
- ☐ Year 12
- ☐ Certificate I or II
- ☐ Certificate III or IV
- ☐ Diploma
- ☐ Advanced Diploma
- ☐ Associate Degree
- ☐ Bachelor Degree
- ☐ Graduate Certificate
- ☐ Graduate Diploma
- ☐ Masters Degree by Coursework (eg. MBA)
- ☐ Masters degree by Research
- ☐ Doctorate (eg. PhD, DBA)
- ☐ I have not completed any formal education
- ☐ Other (please specify)

**Almost...**

**\*24. What is your estimated, personal annual income?**

- ☐ Under \$9,999
- ☐ \$10,000-\$19,999
- ☐ \$20,000-\$29,999
- ☐ \$30,000-\$39,999
- ☐ \$40,000-\$49,999
- ☐ \$50,000-\$59,999
- ☐ \$60,000-\$69,999
- ☐ \$70,000-\$79,999
- ☐ \$80,000+

**Only one to go...**

**25. Are there any last comments that you'd like to make about The Falls Music and Arts Festival?**

**Do you want a chance to win free Falls tickets?**

**26. Please provide your email address below if you wish to be entered into the prize draw**

Email Address:

# **Informal Leisure as a Source of Social Capital Formation: *A Festival Case Study***

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## **10. Appendix 2 – 2011 Survey Tool**



## WEAK TIES IN LEISURE: THE ROLE OF OUTDOOR MUSIC FESTIVALS SURVEY

## YOU MUST BE AGED 18 OR OVER TO PARTICIPATE IN THIS SURVEY

Which date did you fill out this survey? ☐ 30<sup>th</sup> December ☐ 31<sup>st</sup> December

## Marion Bay Falls Social Networking:

1. Have you met someone at the Falls? ☐ Yes ☐ No
2. If you answered yes to the question above, please respond to the following:
- |  |                                |                                   |                                 |
|--|--------------------------------|-----------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| a. This person is now a friend                       | <input type="checkbox"/> Agree | <input type="checkbox"/> Disagree | <input type="checkbox"/> Unsure |
| b. This person will only be a friend at the Falls    | <input type="checkbox"/> Agree | <input type="checkbox"/> Disagree | <input type="checkbox"/> Unsure |
| c. I will attempt to contact this person after Falls | <input type="checkbox"/> Agree | <input type="checkbox"/> Disagree | <input type="checkbox"/> Unsure |
| d. I will contact them via social media not phone    | <input type="checkbox"/> Agree | <input type="checkbox"/> Disagree | <input type="checkbox"/> Unsure |
| e. I feel safe to invite this person to my campsite  | <input type="checkbox"/> Agree | <input type="checkbox"/> Disagree | <input type="checkbox"/> Unsure |
3. Is it easy to meet people at the Falls? ☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Unsure
4. Is meeting people at the Falls important? ☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Unsure
5. Is catching old friends at the Falls important? ☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Unsure
6. Do you use the Falls as a meeting place? ☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Unsure
7. Do you have friends you only see at the Falls? ☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Unsure
8. Do you catch up with old friends at the Falls? ☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Unsure
9. Do you feel OK to be yourself at the Falls? ☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Unsure
10. Are you willing to help people at the Falls? ☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Unsure

## Marion Bay Falls Vibe:

11. Please respond to the following:
- |   |                                |                                   |                                 |
|---|--------------------------------|-----------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| a. There is a Falls vibe                            | <input type="checkbox"/> Agree | <input type="checkbox"/> Disagree | <input type="checkbox"/> Unsure |
| b. Marion Bay Falls is different to other Festivals | <input type="checkbox"/> Agree | <input type="checkbox"/> Disagree | <input type="checkbox"/> Unsure |
| c. Tasmanians have a friendly vibe                  | <input type="checkbox"/> Agree | <input type="checkbox"/> Disagree | <input type="checkbox"/> Unsure |
| d. Tasmanian festivals have a friendly vibe         | <input type="checkbox"/> Agree | <input type="checkbox"/> Disagree | <input type="checkbox"/> Unsure |
| e. 3 day festivals are better than 1 day ones       | <input type="checkbox"/> Agree | <input type="checkbox"/> Disagree | <input type="checkbox"/> Unsure |
| f. 3 day festivals are more social than 1 day ones  | <input type="checkbox"/> Agree | <input type="checkbox"/> Disagree | <input type="checkbox"/> Unsure |
| g. The size of the Falls is important to me         | <input type="checkbox"/> Agree | <input type="checkbox"/> Disagree | <input type="checkbox"/> Unsure |
| h. The Falls is special to me                       | <input type="checkbox"/> Agree | <input type="checkbox"/> Disagree | <input type="checkbox"/> Unsure |
| i. Being in a unique place is important to me       | <input type="checkbox"/> Agree | <input type="checkbox"/> Disagree | <input type="checkbox"/> Unsure |
| j. I feel welcome at the Falls                      | <input type="checkbox"/> Agree | <input type="checkbox"/> Disagree | <input type="checkbox"/> Unsure |
| k. Camping at a festival is important to me         | <input type="checkbox"/> Agree | <input type="checkbox"/> Disagree | <input type="checkbox"/> Unsure |

THANKYOU FOR COMPLETING THIS SURVEY



## Appendix 2 – 2011 Survey Tool

### Technology:

#### 12. What forms of Social Technologies do you use on a daily basis?

- ☐ Mobile Texts ☐ Mobile Calls ☐ Facebook ☐ Twitter ☐ Skype  
☐ Google+ ☐ Tout ☐ ICQ/MSN etc ☐ Blogs ☐ Other

#### 13. What forms of Social Technologies have you used in the last month?

- ☐ Mobile Texts ☐ Mobile Calls ☐ Facebook ☐ Twitter ☐ Skype  
☐ Google+ ☐ Tout ☐ ICQ/MSN etc ☐ Blogs ☐ Other

#### 14. What do you use your mobile phone for?

- ☐ Texting ☐ Calling ☐ Facebooking ☐ Tweeting ☐ Gaming  
☐ Google+ing ☐ Net surfing ☐ Blogging ☐ Don't Have 1 ☐ Other

### Marion Bay Falls Spend:

#### 15. How much do you expect to spend to get to and from the Falls (inc. travel, tix etc) and on supplies?:

- ☐ Under \$250 ☐ \$251-\$500 ☐ \$501-\$750 ☐ \$751-\$1000 ☐ \$1001-\$1250  
☐ \$1251-\$1500 ☐ \$1501-\$1750 ☐ \$1751-\$2000 ☐ \$2000-\$2950 ☐ Over \$3000

#### 16. How much do you expect to spend while at the Falls (inc. food, drinks, merchandise etc)?:

- ☐ Under \$50 ☐ \$51-\$100 ☐ \$101-\$150 ☐ \$151-\$200 ☐ \$201-\$250  
☐ \$251-\$300 ☐ \$301-\$350 ☐ \$351-\$400 ☐ \$401-\$500 ☐ Over \$500

### Demographic Data:

#### 17. How many times have you been to the Falls (including this year)?

- ☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ More than 4

#### 18. Gender:

- ☐ Male ☐ Female

#### 19. Age:

- ☐ 18-19 ☐ 20-24 ☐ 25-29 ☐ 30-34 ☐ 35-39  
☐ 40-44 ☐ 45-49 ☐ 50-54 ☐ 54-59 ☐ 60+

#### 20. Postcode of where you live:

#### 21. Highest level of study:

- ☐ Year 10 ☐ Year 12 ☐ Cert I or II ☐ Cert III or IV ☐ Diploma  
☐ Adv Dip ☐ Assoc Deg ☐ Bachelor ☐ Grad Cert ☐ Grad Dip  
☐ Masters ☐ Doctorate ☐ None of the above

#### 22. Personal income level:

- ☐ Under \$10k ☐ \$10k-\$19k ☐ \$20k-\$29k ☐ \$30k-\$39k ☐ \$40k-\$49k  
☐ \$50k-\$59k ☐ \$60k-\$69k ☐ \$70k-\$79k ☐ \$80k & over

#### 23. If you would like to be entered in the draw for prizes please write your email address below:

#### 24. Is there anything else you'd like to say?

THANKYOU FOR COMPLETING THIS SURVEY

# **Informal Leisure as a Source of Social Capital Formation: *A Festival Case Study***

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## **11. Appendix 3 – 2010 Interview Guide**



## WEAK TIES IN LEISURE: THE ROLE OF OUTDOOR MUSIC FESTIVALS

### Semi-Structured, Facilitated Focus Group Discussions

#### RUNNING SHEET AND PROMPT QUESTIONS

Location:

Date and Time of Day:

Group Number:

Numbers in Group:

#### Introduction:

- ☐ 1. Introduce self and seek participation
- ☐ 2. Check that there's no U/18s
- ☐ 3. Hand over information sheets to participants and highlight content
- ☐ 4. Make clear note about voice recording
- ☐ 5. Allow the participants to select who they want involved in the discussion
- ☐ 6. Advise participants that no other participants may become involved once the focus group has commenced
- ☐ 7. Get them to choose a false name for the session

#### Facilitated Discussion Prompt Open Questions:

- ☐ 1. Please state your 'name' and your willingness to participate
- ☐ 2. Did you all come together? Did you know each other before the Festival?
- ☐ 3. What brings you to the Festival? Why are you here?
- ☐ 4. Can you tell me about what you have experienced so far? What's the vibe like?
- ☐ 5. How do you keep in touch with people while you're here?
- ☐ 6. Do you know any others in nearby tent sites? If so, did you meet them here?
- ☐ 7. Have you made any friends here? If so, would you expect to keep in contact with them (and how)?

#### Wrap Up:

- ☐ 1. Is there anything else you'd like to pass on?
- ☐ 2. Thank participants and tell them how much their input was appreciated

# **Informal Leisure as a Source of Social Capital Formation: *A Festival Case Study***

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## **12. Appendix 4 – 2011 Interview Guide**



**WEAK TIES IN LEISURE: THE ROLE OF OUTDOOR MUSIC FESTIVALS**

**Semi-Structured, One-on-One Discussions**

**RUNNING SHEET AND PROMPT QUESTIONS**

**Individual #:**                      **Date:** 30/12/2011 31/12/2011                      **Time of Day:**                      **am/pm**

**Introduction:**

- ☐ 1. Introduce self and seek participation
- ☐ 2. Check that this person is not U/18
- ☐ 3. Hand over information sheet to participant and highlight content
- ☐ 4. Make clear note about voice recording
- ☐ 5. Get them to choose a false name for the session

**Facilitated Discussion Prompt Open Questions:**

- ☐ 1. Please state your 'name' and your willingness to participate
- ☐ 2. How many Falls have you attended?
- ☐ 3. How old are you and where are you from?
- ☐ 4. What brings you to the Festival? Why are you here?
- ☐ 5. Please tell me about what you have experienced so far. What's the vibe like?
- ☐ 6. Please describe what the Falls means to you
- ☐ 7. What kind of people come to the Falls? Do you feel a part of this community?
- ☐ 8. Please describe the Falls location and what it means to you?
- ☐ 9. Are you here with friends you already knew or are they friends of friends?
- ☐ 10. Have you made any friends here? If so, please tell me about how you met them.
- ☐ 11. Would you keep in contact with these new friends? If so, how?
- ☐ 12. Would you say that there's such a thing as a Falls Friend (e.g. someone that you only see at the Falls)? Please describe this kind of friend.
- ☐ 13. Does the Falls feel like it changes over the three days that you're here? Please explain.
- ☐ 14. Please tell me about what the size of the Falls means to you.

**Wrap Up:**

- ☐ 1. Thank participant and tell them how much their input was appreciated
- ☐ 2. Hand them gift